Two Little Women and Treasure House

Carolyn Wells

Author of
THE MARJORIE Books
Etc.

TWO LITTLE WOMEN
AND
TREASURE HOUSE

A SEQUEL TO
TWO LITTLE WOMEN

By CAROLYN WELLS

Author of the "Marjorie" Books, Etc

Dorinda Fayre and Dorothy Rose, the heroines of "Two Little Women," are again the central characters in this story—but there is another most important character, or rather "thing," in the story, namely the wonderful Treasure House that the girls' fathers built for them. This Treasure House was all fixed up with window seats, a dining room, and even a little kitchen where the girls could make fudge for their parties. And then there is Bernice, the daughter of the rich railroad man, too, who complicates the story and who furnishes the center of the most thrilling, exciting scheme.

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN AND TREASURE HOUSE

BOOKS BY CAROLYN WELLS

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN SERIES

Two Little Women
Two Little Women and Treasure House

"All right," Dolly blazed back, "if she *doesn't* go, I don't!"

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN AND TREASURE HOUSE

BY

CAROLYN WELLS

AUTHOR OF

THE PATTY BOOKS, THE MARJORIE BOOKS, TWO LITTLE WOMEN SERIES, ETC.

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TWO LITTLE WOMEN AND TREASURE HOUSE

CHAPTER I

ALL THEIR OWN!

"Oh, two rooms!"

"Oh, a fireplace!"

"Oh, a *window-seat!*"

"*Two* window-seats!"

These exclamations fell swiftly and explosively from the lips of Dotty Rose and Dolly Fayre, as they leaned over the table at which Mr. Rose was drawing plans.

And such plans! And for such a purpose! Why, the whole project was nothing more nor less than a house, a real little house for those two fortunate girls! All their own, with fireplaces and window-seats and goodness knows what all delightful contrivances.

It had come about because of the fact that the girls had to study pretty hard, now that they were in High School, and both found difficulty in finding just the right place to study. Dolly declared that Trudy was always having company, and the laughter and chatter was so permeating, she couldn't find a place in the house to get out of hearing the noise.

While Dotty said little Genie was always carrying on with her young playmates, or else Mother and Aunt Clara were having Sewing Society or something, and she never could be quiet in the library. The girls, of course, had their own bedrooms, but both mothers objected, on hygienic grounds, to using those for sitting-rooms.

So Mr. Rose had cooked up a most fascinating scheme, and after a discussion with Mr. Fayre, he elucidated it to the girls. It seemed Mr. Fayre fully approved of it, and was quite willing to pay his share of the expense, but he was too busy to look after the details of building, and begged Mr. Rose to attend to all that.

Mr. Rose, who was cashier of the Berwick Bank, had plenty of leisure time, and, moreover, had a taste for architecture, so the plans were in process of drafting. As the house was to be exceedingly simple, he felt he could plan it all himself, and thus save the expense of an architect.

"You see," he said to his interested audience, "it is really nothing but a summer house, only it is enclosed, so as to be —"

"A winter-house!" interrupted Dotty. "Oh, Daddy, it is too perfectly scrumptiousiferous! I don't see how I can live through such joy!"

Dolly's blue eyes sparkled, but her pleasure was too deep for words, and she expressed it in long drawn sighs, and occasional Oh's!

"Say twenty feet by fifteen for the whole house," Mr. Rose said, musingly. "Then divide that in halves. Thus we have a front room, a sort of living room, ten by fifteen. Quite big enough, for in addition we can have a deep window-seat at each end."

"Where we can curl up in to study!" cried Dotty. "Oh, Dollyrinda, did you ever *dream* anything so perfect?"

"I never did! And what is in the other room, Mr. Rose?"

"Well, a sort of dining-room, say ten by ten of it, and that will leave a neat little five by ten for a bit of a kitchenette."

"Ooh — eeh — I can't take it all in! A kitchenette! Where we can make fudge and cook messes — oh, Dad-dy!" Dotty threw her arms around her father's neck, and in her great gratitude, Dolly did too.

"Well, of course, the dining-room isn't exactly for an eating room exclusively, but I know you will enjoy having little teas there with your friends, or taffy pulls or whatever the fad is nowadays."

"Oh, indeed we can," said Dolly; "we can all go

there after skating and have hot chocolate and sandwiches! Maybe it won't be fun!"

"But it is primarily for study," warned Mr. Rose. "I don't think though, you two bookworms will neglect your lessons."

He was right, for both Dolly and Dotty were studious, and now, being in the High School, they were most anxious to make good records. They studied diligently every evening, and though Dotty learned her lessons more quickly, Dolly remembered hers better. But both were fond of fun and frolic, and they foresaw wonderful opportunities in the new house.

"Oh, a piazza!" squealed Dotty, as under her father's clever fingers a wide piazza showed on the paper.

"Yes, of course; this will be a summer house also, you know, and a piazza is a necessity. Perhaps in the winter it can be enclosed with glass. All such details must come later. First we must get the proportions and the main plan. And here it is, in a nutshell. Or, rather, in a rectangle. Just half is the living-room, and the other half is two-thirds dining-room and one-third kitchen. The kitchen includes kitchenette and pantry."

"What is a kitchenette, exactly?" asked Dolly.

"Only what its name implies," returned Mr. Rose, smiling. "Just a little kitchen. There will be a gas stove,— no, I think it would be better for you to have it all electric. Then you can have an electric oven and toaster and chafing-dish, and any such contraptions you want. How's that?"

"Too good to be true!" and Dolly sighed in deep contentment. "How long will it take to build it?"

"Not long, if I can get the workmen to go right at it, and I hope I can. Now, suppose we plan the living-room, which is, of course, the study."

"Let's call it the Study," said Dolly. "Sounds sort of wise and grown-up."

"Very well. Here then, in the Study, suppose we have the door right in the middle of the front wall, and opening on the front veranda. Then a small window each side of the door, and a big square bay, with cushioned seat, at each end of the room."

"Glorious!" and Dolly danced about on one foot. "Then we can each have one of them to study in, every afternoon after school."

"With a blazing wood fire — where's the fireplace, Daddy?"

"Here, opposite the entrance door. Then you see, one chimney in the middle of the house, will provide for a fireplace in each room. I'm not sure this

will give you heat enough. If not, you must depend on gas logs. We can't be bothered with a furnace of any sort. Perhaps in the very coldest weather you can't inhabit your castle."

"Oh, that won't matter," and Dolly's good-natured face smiled brightly; "if we have it most of the time, we'll willingly study somewhere else on extra cold days. And at one side of the fireplace, the door through to the dining-room — oh, yes, I see."

"Right, my child. And on the other side of the fireplace, in the Study, a set of built-in bookshelves, and in the dining-room, a built-in glass closet."

"But we haven't any glass!" and Dotty looked amazed at the idea.

"Well, I dare say the mothers of you will scout around and give you some old junk from the attics. I know of a gorgeous dish you can have." Mr. Rose's eyes twinkled, and Dotty broke into laughter; "I know! you mean 'The Eyesore'!"

This was a hideous affair that some one had sent Mrs. Rose as a Christmas Gift, and the family had long since relegated it to the oblivion of a dark cupboard. "No, thank you!" Dot went on, "I'd rather have things from the ten-cent store."

"They have some awfully nice things there," suggested Dolly, "and I know Mother has a lot of odds

and ends we can have. Oh, when the house is built, it will be lots of fun to furnish it. Trudy will make us lovely table-covers and things like that. And we can have paper napkins for our spreads."

"And Aunt Clara says she will make all the curtains,— whatever sort we want."

"That's lovely of her! I know we'll have lots of things given to us, and we'll find lots of things around our homes — and the rest we'll do ourselves."

"Yes, and Thomas will bring wood for us, and take away the ashes. We must have enormous wood-baskets or wood-boxes. Oh, it's just like furnishing a real house! What loads of fun we'll have!"

"Then, in the kitchen," Mr. Rose went on, drawing as he spoke, "we'll have a tiny sink, all nice white enamel, and a wall-cupboard for your dish-towels and soap and such things. Also a sort of a small — a very small — kitchen cabinet for your pepper and salt, with a place underneath for pans and kettles."

"You think a lot about the kitchen, Daddy. I believe you expect to come there sometimes to join our feasts."

"I certainly shall, if I'm invited. Then, you see, the dining-room can have a deep window, and if you don't care for a window-seat there, how about a window-box of bright flowers?"

"I don't know about that, Mr. Rose," demurred Dolly. "If the house isn't always warm, the poor posies would freeze, wouldn't they?"

"Right you are, Dollykins. Cut out the growing plants, then, and have now and then a vase or bowl of flowers on the table. Now, let me see. An electric light over the table in the dining-room, and perhaps a side light or two. Then in the Study, a reading light for each, and one or two pretty fixtures beside."

"Why, will we use it so much at night, Mr. Rose?"

"If you choose to. And anyway, in the winter time, you'll need lights by five o'clock, or on dark days, even earlier."

"That's so; how thoughtful you are. I s'pose some days we won't go in the house at all, and others we'll be there all the afternoon and all the evening."

"And all Saturdays," said Dotty; "we'll always spend Saturdays there, and we can make things for the house or make our Christmas presents, or make fudge and have the girls and boys come over —"

"Or just sit by the fire and read," interrupted Dolly.

"Oh, you old kitten! You'd rather lie by the fire and purr than do anything at all!"

"Well, then I'll do that. We're to do whatever we please in our own house, aren't we, Mr. Rose?"

"Yes, indeed, Dolly. But amicable always. No, I don't think you two are inclined to quarrel, but you do have little differences now and then, and I'd hate to have the charm of this little nest disturbed by foolish squabbles."

"I'll promise, for one, *never* to scrap," said Dolly, eagerly, and Dotty said with equal fervour, "Me, too!"

"We'll have nice, plain, hard floors," continued Mr. Rose, "and I'm sure your mothers can find some discarded rugs."

"Oh, we can make those," exclaimed Dolly. "Don't you know, Dot, that new way your Aunt Clara told us about? You take rags, you know, and sew them in pipings, and then crochet them,— oh, it's just lovely!"

"Yes, I know. We'll each make one of those, it'll be fine!"

"And we'll put them in the Study, one on each side of the room. Yours on my side, mine on yours."

"All right. Which side do you want?"

"I'll take the side next my house and you the side

next yours. Then if our mothers call us, we can hear them."

"Good idea," said Mr. Rose. "I think we'll put the house just on the dividing line between your father's ground and mine."

"And Mother can hang a red flag out the window if she wants me in a hurry. Or if dinner is ready."

"We might have a telephone," suggested Dotty.

"We'll see about that later," said Mr. Rose. "You must remember that the expenses are counting up, and Mr. Fayre and I are not millionaires. But we want you to have a good substantial little nook for yourselves. Then, later, if we see fit to add a telephone or a wireless apparatus or an airship garage, we can do so."

"All right," returned Dotty with a satisfied grin. "Say, Doll, shall we bring our desks from our bedrooms?"

"No," Mr. Rose answered for her. "Those are too flimsy and dainty; and besides, you'll need them where they are. I shall ask the privilege of contributing two solid, sensible Mission desks of greenish tinge, with chairs to match. Then if you want to curl up on your window cushions to study you may, but there will be a place to write your compositions."

"Lovely, Father! How good you are!" and Dotty fell on his neck, while Dolly possessed herself of his hand and patted it.

The two girls were equally fond of their fathers, but Mr. Rose was more chummy in manner than Mr. Fayre. The latter was devoted to his children, but was less demonstrative of his affection.

But Dolly well knew that her father would not be outdone in kindness or generosity and that he would give an equally welcome gift, as well as pay his share of the building expenses.

"All right, Mr. Rose," she said, "if you do that, I'm sure father will furnish the dining-room with whatever we want."

"There won't be much needed for that, just a table and chairs, which can doubtless be snared in our attics. But your father, Dotty, offered the whole kitchenette outfit, which, I can tell you, is a noble gift."

"Indeed it is!" cried Dotty. "I'm crazy to get at that electricky-cooky business!"

"So'm I," declared Dolly. "When will it be all done, Mr. Rose?"

"Can't say exactly. If all goes well you ought to get in by the last of October."

"About Hallowe'en, then," said Dolly. "We

might have a kind of Hallowe'en party for a housewarming."

"Gay!" cried Dotty. "We'll get all our treasures in it by that time."

"Let's call it our Treasure House,—how's that for a name?"

"Pretty good," said Mr. Rose. "I've been wondering what to call it. Treasure House isn't bad at all. Makes you think of Treasure Island."

"Yes, so it does," and Dolly's blue eyes sparkled at the name of one of her best-loved books. "Oh, won't it be fun to arrange our bookshelves. I'm glad to move some of my books, my shelves at home are overrunning."

"Then, you see, children," Mr. Rose was still adding to his drawings, "in the summer, you can have hammocks on the veranda, and piazza-boxes with flowers —"

"Yes, Daddy, dear, you *shall* get those flower-boxes set up as soon as the gentle Spring gets around."

"Well, I do love flowers," and Mr. Rose smiled, for his family well knew his great fondness for gardening. "Now you girls won't have any too much time to get your flummerydiddles ready. For after

the house is built and papered and painted, you ought to have your furnishings all ready. And to make curtains and cushions and lace whatd'y'callums — tidies? will be a few weeks' work,— won't it?"

"Yes, indeedy. But all our beloved lady relatives will help us and among our sisters and our mothers and our aunts, I spect we'll accumulate about enough housekeeping stuff to stock a hotel." Dotty danced around the table as she talked, and catching Dolly in her arms, the two executed a sort of triumphal hoppity-skip that expressed their joy and relieved their feelings.

"And now," sighed Dolly, suddenly looking thoughtful, "I've got to go right straight, smack home and do my Geometry for to-morrow."

"Oh, my goodness! me too!" exclaimed Dotty. "Dear! how I wish Treasure House was done, and I could go there to study. It's an awful long time to wait."

"But we can make things every chance we get. Oh, Dotty, I'm going to make a birch-bark scrap-basket. I've got a lot of that bark left that I brought down from Crosstrees. Won't it be fine?"

"Great! Shall we have two?"

"No, only one scrapbasket and such things. It's

more cosy. But two of everything that we use separately. Like two desks, you know."

"Only one set of bookshelves."

"Well, there'll be nooks for books, beside the fireplace, and beside the window casings," said Mr. Rose, "in addition to the regular shelves. I haven't half fixed those things up yet."

"Oh, it will be just heavenly!" sighed Dolly. "But I must scoot to my Geometry now. See you to-morrow, Dot. Good-bye."

"All right. Good-bye."

CHAPTER II

A JOKE AT SCHOOL

When the two D's reached school next morning, they found a group of their friends giggling and whispering in a corner of the Recreation Room.

"What's the joke?" asked Dotty as they drew near.

"Hello, Two D's," cried Tod Brown. "How are you, Toodies? Just wait till you hear what's up! The greatest sell ever! The biggest joke of the season. Oh, me, oh, my!"

"Tell us," begged Dolly. "Tell us, Tod, what is it?" She was taking off her hat and coat as she talked, and as she stepped into the coatroom to hang them up, Celia Ferris slipped in and whispered to her. "Now don't jump on the scheme, Dolly Fayre. You're such a goody-goody, I'm half afraid to let you in on it."

"Why, is it mean?" and Dolly's blue eyes flashed, for she hated a mean joke.

"No, it isn't mean, at least no meaner than she deserves. But I wish they wouldn't tell you; you're

an old spoilsport, and I know you'll say you won't join in."

"Join in what? Do tell me, or I can't say *what* I'll do."

"Come on out. Tod will tell you," and the two girls joined the others.

"What is it, Tod?" asked Dolly, as she came up to the laughing boy.

"Now, Dollykin, do be real nice and don't be a horrid old Miss Prim! You see, Miss Partland, the Geometry teacher, is so cross and horrid and unjust to us, we're going to pay her out. And we've thought up the greatest scheme! Just listen!"

"No, let me tell her," said Joe Collins; "you'll make it seem worse'n it is. Why, Doll, it's only this. You see, Miss Partland isn't looking very well, and we are all going to tell her so. She ought to know the truth. And she keeps a lot of us in every afternoon, and we don't want her to. So we're each going to tell her, as we get the chance, that she looks sort of ill, and then, we think she'll want to go home early, herself, and she won't stay to keep us in. Isn't that all right?"

"Why, that doesn't seem very bad," said Dolly, dimpling as she smiled. "How are you going to bring it in?"

"Oh, just casually, you know. If you have a chance, you just say, 'Aren't you feeling well, Miss Partland?' or something like that."

"I'd just as lieve say that, if she looks ill; but I won't if she doesn't," returned Dolly, very decidedly.

"All right; you'll find she looks ill. Why, the poor lady is on the verge of nervous prostration, and so will we all be, if she is so hard on us."

"Did she keep you in, yesterday?"

"Yep; just 'cause I had a little mite of a mistake in one example! Oh, she's the limit, she is!"

"And do you think she'll be any sweeter-natured if we sympathise with her for feeling bad?"

"Well, maybe; you never can tell."

"I think it's a grand scheme!" declared Dotty. "She's an old fuss anyway. She found fault with my examples because I didn't take a separate sheet of paper for each one. I'd just as lieve, only I didn't know she wanted me to."

"How's your house comin' on, Dot?" sang out Lollie Henry.

"Perfectly great! It'll be done by Hallowe'en, and maybe we won't have one rollicking good time!"

"Won't we just! You want to look out, you know Hallowe'en is the time for tricks, and I dunno what the boys will get off."

"Not in our new house! If anybody takes our doors off of their hinges or does anything mean, I won't stand it, that's all!" and Dotty shook her curly black head and her dark eyes sparkled with anger at the thought of such desecration.

"Well, look out, that's all," said Lollie, teasingly, and then the bell called them to the schoolroom.

Soon after they all trooped to a classroom for the Geometry lesson. As he passed the teacher's desk, Tod Brown tripped against her platform, and nearly fell over on it.

"What a clumsy boy!" exclaimed Miss Partland, frowning, and indeed the stumble was an awkward one. Small wonder, as it was done entirely on purpose!

Tod straightened himself up, made a nice, boyish bow, and said, "Please excuse me, Miss Partland. Oh, don't feel alarmed, I'm not hurt."

"And I'm not alarmed, you silly boy! I am annoyed at you, not sorry for you."

"Yes'm. But, Miss Partland, you're so white. Why, you look quite ill! Mayn't I get you a glass of water?"

"Go to your seat!" Miss Partland turned scarlet, both from irritation at Tod's speech, and a sudden nervous fear for herself.

Tod went to his place, and when it was Tad's turn to go to the blackboard, he paused a moment, and looked straight into the teacher's face. "Why, Miss Partland," he whispered to her, "don't you feel well? You look awful queer!"

"Go to the board," she said, but she was evidently disturbed at his remark.

Tad went obediently, and did his work well, then, as he returned to his seat, he gave Miss Partland a long, searching look, and gravely shook his head. The other pupils saw him, and saw, too, that the teacher looked worried. The joke was working. Surely, she would not stay to-night to keep anybody in.

Next was Dotty's turn. She went toward the blackboard, but on the way, she stopped in front of Miss Partland, and looked at her. Then, with an anxious look on her face, she stepped up on the platform, and whispering in the teacher's ear, said: "If you're not feeling well, Miss Partland, why don't you go to the rest room for a while?"

"I'm perfectly well, child, what's the matter with you?"

"You don't look so," said Dotty, shaking her head, and looking back at her victim, as she moved slowly to the board.

Several others did similarly; some not commenting on the teacher's looks, but merely staring at her, and then looking away quickly.

Dolly Fayre had not noticed much of the whole performance, for she was behind with her lesson, and was struggling with a refractory problem, hoping to get it done before she had to go to the blackboard to demonstrate it.

And so, when she rose from her seat, she was surprised and shocked to see how alarmed Miss Partland looked. Indeed the poor lady was all upset with bewilderment at the observations made by her pupils. She had begun to think there must be something serious and noticeable the matter with her. She was trembling with nervous apprehension, and was on the verge of tears. And so, Dolly, who had forgotten Tod's joke, said, most honestly, "Why, what *is* the matter, Miss Partland? You look awfully ill!"

The other pupils, hearing this, chuckled silently, thinking what a good little actress Dolly was.

But to Miss Partland it was the last straw.

"I am ill," she cried out; "very ill. Help me, Dolly, to the rest room."

Leaning on the shoulder of Dolly, who was pretty

well frightened, Miss Partland stumbled along to the rest room,— a place provided for any one suddenly indisposed.

Dolly assisted her teacher to lie down on a couch, and dipping her handkerchief in cold water, held it to her forehead.

"Let me call somebody," said Dolly. "I don't know what I ought to do."

"No, I feel better now," said Miss Partland. "But I can't go back to the classroom. I think I must go home. You may go to Mr. Macintosh, Dolly, and tell him I went home, ill."

"Yes, Miss Partland," replied Dolly, and then it suddenly came to her, that this was the result of Tod's joke! "Were you ill this morning?" she asked.

"No, not in the slightest. It is a sudden attack of some sort. Perhaps I shall die!"

"Oh, no. You'll be all right in an hour or so. What sort of pain do you feel, Miss Partland?"

"Not any definite pain. But queer all over, as if some illness were impending."

I do believe, thought Dolly to herself, that it's all the fault of those horrid boys, telling her she looked ill! And then she suddenly remembered that she her-

self had told Miss Partland so, too, and very emphatically. But she had told her in earnest, while the others had been carrying out their jest.

However, her comment was just the same as theirs, and doubtless helped to produce this effect. She wondered what to do. At first, she thought she would tell the whole story, and let the boys and girls take the consequences of their ill-timed joke. Then, she feared it might so enrage Miss Partland to know of it, that it would make her worse.

She decided not to tell at present, anyway, and she helped the teacher on with her hat and coat, and went with her to the door.

"Tell Mr. Macintosh I am quite ill," she said as she went away. And Dolly went to the Principal's room to do her bidding.

"Did Miss Partland say what the trouble was?" asked the surprised man. "Is she subject to these attacks?"

"She didn't say, Mr. Macintosh, and I have never known her to be ill before. I think she will be all right, to-morrow."

"You seem to know a great deal for a miss of your age! Have you had much experience with heart attacks?"

"I didn't say it was a heart attack," said poor

Dolly, torn by her knowledge of what had really caused the trouble.

"It must have been, from what you say. That's what I mean, you are too young and inexperienced to attend alone on a suffering victim of heart disease. Why didn't you call some help?"

"I did want to, sir, but Miss Partland wouldn't let me."

"You may go. Return to the class and tell them they are dismissed. Let them all go to their next recitation at the proper time."

"Yes, Mr. Macintosh."

"Stop a minute." Dolly turned. "Do you know anything more about this affair than you have told me?"

Dolly hesitated. What should she do? She did know more about it; she knew of the joke the boys had made up, and she felt almost sure that it was owing to this foolish jest that Miss Partland had imagined she felt ill so vividly, that at last she really did feel so. And yet, if Dolly "peached" on the boys, she well knew what they would think of her! It was a hard position. But, she thought quickly, it couldn't help Miss Partland to tell of the joke now, and then again the illness might not have been caused by the joke after all. Dolly had been so engrossed

with her difficult problem that she had not seen the successive boys and girls look at Miss Partland with such evident sympathy, anxiety and even consternation.

Her hesitation naturally made the Principal think she was withholding some information of importance, and he said so.

"No, Mr. Macintosh," said Dolly, firmly; "I do not feel sure that I am. The only thing I know, is not positively connected with Miss Partland's illness, although it may be. But as I am not sure, I am not justified in even speaking of it to you."

The Principal looked at her attentively. "You're a queer child," he said.

"Yes, I am," replied Dolly, thoughtfully. "But I'm trying to see what is my duty, and I can't say anything till I find out."

"At any rate, you're an honest little girl, and I don't believe you know anything that you really ought to tell, or you'd tell it."

"Oh, thank you, sir. That's just it. I *don't* think I ought to, or I *would*."

Dismissed from the room, Dolly returned to the class and told them the lesson would not be resumed that day, as Miss Partland had gone home ill. She looked reproachfully at the boys who had been ring-

leaders in the "joke" and at Celia Ferris, too, who had also been a party to it.

But as there were many in the class who knew nothing about it, no word was said then and there, nor could there be until after school.

Then Dolly told what had happened. "And to think," she concluded, "that Miss Partland was not ill at all, but so many remarks on her looking poorly, made her think she was,— and then — she was!"

"Pooh, nonsense!" said Lollie Henry; "you can't make a lady ill by telling her she doesn't look quite up to the mark."

"Yes, you can," declared Dolly. "It's what they call auto-suggestion, or something. Just the same way, if you tell anybody they look well, why, then they get well. I've heard Mother talk about it."

"Well, then," said Tod Brown, "all we've got to do, is to go around to Miss Partland's house and tell her she's looking as blooming as a peach!"

"Sure!" said Tad. "That's dead easy. Come on."

"No," said Dolly, "you can't rush off like that! You'd probably make her worse."

"Well, what does she want, then?"

"Oh, Tad, you're so silly!" and Dolly couldn't help laughing at him.

"I think you're silly, Dolly," said Celia. "I don't believe it was our joke that upset her, at all. I believe she'd been sick anyway."

"No, she wouldn't. She said she was perfectly well this morning. You know, Celia, that it *was* your speeches, one after another, that scared her into thinking she was ill. And it was enough to, too! Why, I wasn't noticing at the time, I was studying, but Dot told me afterward, how you all told her she looked so terrible, and you pretended to be scared to death!"

"Well, you said the same thing to her!"

"Yes, but I meant it! By the time I went up to the board, you had all frightened her so, she was white and shaky-looking. I was sure she was going to faint."

"Yes, Dolly was in earnest," said Dotty. "If we did any harm, Doll can't be included. When she said that to Miss Partland, it was true. When *we* said it, it wasn't."

"Oh, I'm not sticking myself up," began Dolly. "And I'm not blaming the rest of you. I think it was a mean joke, but never mind that now. What I'm thinking of is what we ought to do. Seems if we ought to set matters right somehow."

"I don't think so," said Celia. "It's always bet-

ter to let well enough alone, my mother says. I bet that by to-morrow morning, Miss Partland will be all right and will have forgotten all about this foolishness."

"I bet she will too," said Lollie. "Say, Dolly, don't worry over it. It wasn't your fault anyway. And I don't believe it will make old Party really ill. It couldn't. And it may make her more sweet-tempered if she thinks she's subject to — what d'y' call em? — heart attacks."

"How do you know it was a heart attack?" demanded Dolly.

"I heard Mr. Macintosh tell another teacher that Miss Party had gone home because she had a heart attack in the classroom."

"I don't believe it was her heart at all," said Dolly slowly. "Why should any one think so? It was only nervousness, caused by your foolish trick. I'm sorry for Miss Partland. If she isn't all right to-morrow, I'm going to tell her the whole story."

"Meany!" cried Celia; "it's awful mean to tell tales."

"Not so mean as to play tricks!" retorted Dolly, and then she and Dotty had reached their homes, and went in, while the others went on their way.

CHAPTER III

AN AFTERNOON CALL

Dolly worried a good deal over her teacher's illness, and when Miss Partland was not at school the next day, she decided to go to see her, on the way home. The boys tried to dissuade her, but Dolly was firm.

"No use trying to steer off Dolly Fayre, if she's made up her mind," said Lollie Henry. "If she has a bee in her bonnet, she sticks to it like a puppy to a root."

They all laughed at this, but Dotty said, earnestly, "Don't go, Doll; you'll have to tell on the boys and girls, and that will be awful mean."

"No, I won't. I've a plan of my own, and I won't say a word about your playing a joke, or anything about any of you. But I do think, Lollie, and you Tad and Tod too, that it's a mean, horrid thing to play practical jokes, and I think you *ought* to be told on,—but I won't tell on you."

"Ah, now, Dolly, Towhead Dolly, don't be hard on us," said Tad, in such a wheedlesome way that Dolly had to laugh. "We didn't mean any real harm,

and she *has* been awfully cross to us, and we're not such angels of goodness as you are —"

"I'm not an angel of goodness, Tad Brown, and I'll thank you to stop making fun of me! But I do believe in being decent to a teacher, even if she is strict in her rules."

"Come on, Dolly," said Dotty, as they neared the street where Miss Partland lived; "if you're going, I'll go with you."

"Oh, ho!" jeered Lollie, "*two* little angels of goodness, little white angels, with shiny wings! Well, fly into old Party's house, and see what's the matter with her,— mumps or measles!"

The two girls went to the house, and were invited to go up to the teacher's room.

They found Miss Partland, sitting in an easy chair, looking disconsolate indeed.

"How do you do, girls?" she said, listlessly; "won't you sit down?"

The two D's sat down, and Dolly said, at once, "Oh, I'm glad to see you looking so much better, Miss Partland! You're not really ill, are you?"

"I don't know, Dolly," and the poor lady looked sadly distraught. She was not an interesting invalid in appearance. She had on an old grey flannel wrapper, and her hair was untidy. A bowl of broth,

cold,— and one or two bottles were on her table, and the whole room had an unkempt, uncared-for air. "You see," she went on, "I didn't know I had heart trouble, and it worries me terribly."

"Do you know it yet?" asked Dolly. "Have you had a doctor?"

"I've sent for him, but he hasn't come yet. But several people have called or telephoned, and they all speak of my heart attack, so I think it must have been that."

Dotty looked very serious, and blushed a little as she realised to what a pass their thoughtless joke had brought the teacher.

"Miss Partland," Dolly went on. "I don't believe it was your heart, or you'd be sicker now. You don't feel bad, do you?"

"N-no,— I guess not,— I can hardly tell."

"Well, you look real well to me —"

"Oh, do I? I'm glad to hear you say so. I thought myself, if it were anything serious, I'd feel worse than I do. I haven't any real pain, you know."

"That's good; and I believe all you want is to brace up and forget it. Forget that little bother of yesterday, I mean."

"Say, Miss Partland," broke in Dotty, "won't

you let me do your hair in a new way that I've just tried on mother's? I often do her hair for her, and she says it rests her a lot. And this new way —"

"Mercy, child, I never had anybody touch my hair in my life!"

"Then you don't know how it helps. Just let me try. Where's your comb? and hairpins? Oh, here they are. No, don't face the mirror, I want you to be surprised."

Dotty bustled around, and almost before Miss Partland knew it, she was having her hair dressed by the skilful little hands. The hair was not long or luxurious, but it was of fine texture, and when released from the tight little knob it was wound in, proved slightly wavy. Dot made the most of it, and drawing it up in a soft French twist, she puffed it out at the sides, and made a most becoming and transforming coiffure.

"There!" she said, "you're real pretty now, and I'd like to see anybody say you look sick!"

Miss Partland looked in the glass and was astounded. The unwonted performance had brought the colour to her cheeks, and interest to her eyes, and when she saw the whole effect in the mirror, she fairly beamed with delight.

"Now, haven't you a nicer kimono, or dressing

gown? This isn't very pretty for afternoon, and the doctor coming and all."

Miss Partland looked amazed. "I never thought about it," she said; "I haven't any other,— or, that is — yes, I have one my sister sent me for Christmas, but I've never worn it. It's too nice."

"Mayn't we see it?"

Miss Partland went to the closet and brought out a big box. From it she took a beautiful Japanese kimono of pale blue silk, embroidered with pink chrysanthemums.

"There," she said, "you see I couldn't wear that."

"Why not?" cried Dolly. "It's lovely! And it just suits your blonde colouring."

This was stretching the point a little, for Miss Partland's blondeness was of the type known as ash, and her faded complexion and dull light blue eyes hardly deserved the name of colouring.

But Dolly was sincere, and she meant to make the most of what little natural vanity the lady possessed.

"Yes, indeed," chimed in Dotty. "That's too pretty to be buried in an old dark closet! Put it on, quick, before the doctor gets here!"

A little bewildered, Miss Partland hurried into

the robe, and the girls were astounded at the becomingness of it.

"Well, well!" cried Dotty. "Try our plans, and you will be surprised at the result! Why, Miss Partland, you're a hummer! A regular peach! Isn't she, Doll?"

"Yes-sir-ee!" And Dolly patted the blue silk approvingly. Then they wound the blue sash, that belonged to the robe, round about her, and tucked the ends in in Chinese fashion.

"You must put that on every day after school, said Dotty, "it's lovely on you."

"But it's too nice. I never dreamed of wearing it —"

"No matter, just you wear it, and when it's worn out I spect sister 'll give you another."

"Of course she would, she's awfully fond of me."

"She'd be fonder, if she could see you now. Clothes make a heap of difference," and Dotty nodded her head sagely. "My goodness, here's the doctor! I hear his automobile stopping. Yes, it is," as she peeped from the window. "Shall we go home, Miss Partland?"

"No, just go in the next room, and after he's gone, I'll tell you what he said."

"Oh, thank you, I do want to know," said Dolly,

and the two ran into the next room and shut the door.

A little time later, Miss Partland opened the door and summoned them. She was smiling and so happy looking that she was almost pretty,— a word rarely used in connection with the Geometry teacher.

"Come in, girls," she said. "The doctor says I have no heart trouble of any sort, and that I am as sound as a dollar!"

"Did he say what ailed you yesterday?"

"He said I was probably nervous over some trifle, but he said it had left no trace, for my nerves are all right now. And, what do you think? He said that as I had enough interest in life to take some pains with my toilette, I was in no danger of nervous prostration! And just think! Before you two came in, I was wondering whether I'd better go to a sanitarium!"

"Oh, Miss Partland! Not really!"

"Yes, really. I thought my whole nervous system was shattered. Everybody said I looked so ill, and they gave me such commiserating glances —"

"Well, they won't any more," interrupted Dotty, who was cut to the soul by these remarks. Well she knew whose suggestions and whose glances had brought about the sad state of things.

"And now," said practical Dolly, "I'm going to straighten up this room a little. You may have more callers."

She whisked away the bowl and bottles into the bathroom. She straightened the shades, dusted a little, and with a few deft touches here and there, she made the room tidy and neat. She found a glass vase which she washed, and setting it on the table, said, "We must go now, Miss Partland, but I'm going to send you a few flowers, and I want you to put them in this vase, and set them right here on the table, will you?"

"Indeed I will, you dear child. You're dear little girls, both, and I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for your pleasant call. I can't promise to wear this elaborate gown every day, but I will buy myself one that is more presentable than the one I had on when you came."

"And have it pretty, Miss Partland," begged Dolly; "pretty things keep you from getting sick."

"I wonder if they do, you little rascal; how do you know?"

"Well, maybe they wouldn't keep you from getting chicken pox, they didn't me, but I'm just sure they're good for nervous prostration."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit," and Miss Partland smiled brightly as she bade the girls good-bye.

"Now I'm going to get her some flowers," said Dolly as they reached the street. "I haven't much left of my allowance, but I can get her half a dozen carnations or two roses. Which would you, Dot?"

"Carnations, I guess. They last longer. I'm going to get her a couple of fruits. Say, a grapefruit and an orange, how's that?"

"Fine! I'm glad you thought of it. It'll cheer her a lot. I say, Dot, we did do her some good."

"I should say we did! But it was all your doing, I just went along."

"Nonsense! You did as much as I did. Why, I don't know how you ever thought of fussing up her hair! It was just the thing, but it never would have occurred to me."

"I dunno myself how I happened to think of it. But her old head looked so frowsy and untidy, I wanted to see if it would make a difference. And it did!"

"I should say so! Here's the fruit store. Going in?"

"Yes, come on."

They went in, and Dotty made a judicious selection of two oranges and a bunch of white grapes,

as they were not sure Miss Partland cared for grapefruit.

"And if any one *doesn't* like it," said Dotty, making a wry face, "they don't like it all over! *I* can't abide it!"

"I love it," returned Dolly, "but as you say, Dot, if people don't like it they don't. Grapes are much safer. Now, come on to the flower shop."

A half dozen carnations of an exquisite shade were available for the money Dolly had, and it was with great satisfaction she saw them put in a box and sent off at once to Miss Partland.

"I say, Dolly, you're an awful trump!" declared Dotty, as they walked along. "I never should have thought of going to fix things up with old Party. And now, I'm awful glad we did. Why is it, you always have these good thinks and I never do?"

"I dunno. Sometimes it makes me mad though when the boys call me goody-goody. And Celia Ferris said I was a spoilsport. That isn't very nice to be called, Dot, is it?"

"No; but you always come out all right. You see, I'm full of the dickens, and when the boys want me to cut up jinks, I go into it head over heels without thinking. You hesitate, and think it over and then you do the right thing."

"Oh, I don't know. Sometimes I think maybe I *am* an old Primmy, as Tad calls me. Hello, here's Tad now."

Tad Brown met them as he came flying round a corner, closely followed by his twin brother Tod.

"Hello, girls," Tad called out. "Been to old Party's? How is she?"

"She's all right," and Dolly laughed gaily. "She's had the doctor and he says her heart's sound as a dollar. So you see your old joke didn't hurt her, after all."

"But it would have," put in Dotty, "if Doll hadn't gone there and chirked her up, and told her she wasn't sick at all."

"You went too," said Dolly, laughing.

"Oh, 'course. Whithersoever thou goest, theresoever will I also went. And say, boys, you've got to be gooder'n pie to-morrow, and every day, to make up to old Party for your badness. She's a funny old thing, but she's nice, and since I've seen her at home, I feel different toward her, more intimate like and sorry for her."

"All right," said Tad, heartily. "I'm ready to be good. I'm pretty well ashamed of that old joke business, since it turned out so badly."

"Me, too," and Tod shook his head. "I thought

it was funny at first, but it didn't pan out well. I'll never play another joke on anybody! any way, not till the next time. Going to the High School Dance, girls?"

"Yes, indeedy!" and Dolly's eyes glistened. "Won't it be fun? It is the first time I've ever been to an evening party."

"Go with me?" and Tod paused in the street, and swept his best dancing-school bow.

"Gracious, I don't know," said Dolly, overcome at this sudden grown-upness. "I don't believe mother will let me go with a boy."

"Oh, yes, she will," said Tad. "Just to a school dance. You go with Tod, Dolly; and, Dot, you go with me, and then we'll be all in the same boat."

"I'd like to," said Dolly, "but I'm sure mother won't let me. What do you think, Dot?"

"I think my mother will muchly object at first, but I think I can coax her into it."

"Why, all the girls will go with the boys," said Tad eagerly. "They always do. You see our bunch has never been in High School before, and when we're in Rome we must do as the Turkeys do."

"Who is going with who else, that you know of?"

"Oh, Celia Ferris is going with Lollie Henry, and Joe Collins —"

"Well, what about Joe Collins?" asked Dolly.

"Oh, nothin'."

"Yes, there is, too; what made you stop short?"

"Well, if you must know, he said he was going to ask you."

"Oh, do you boys talk it all over,— about who you'll take, I mean?"

"Sure we do," said Tod, grinning. "I gave Joe my new knife if he'd let me ask you first."

"You didn't!" and Dolly looked shocked.

"No, of course he didn't!" said Tad. "Don't you let him fool you, Dolly."

The quartette had walked along to the Fayres' house, and the boys wanted to go in and see how the house was coming on. But Dolly wouldn't allow this, as she said she must study her lessons.

"And you must all go home and study," she said shaking her golden head at them. "I want you to have good lessons to-morrow, and cheer Miss Party up."

"I'll tell her she's looking blooming," said Tad, laughing over his shoulder as he went away.

"I'll tell her she's a perfect peach!" declared Tod, and then with gay good-byes they parted.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGH SCHOOL DANCE

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Fayre, doubtfully, when Dolly asked her about going to the dance with Tod. "You're not old enough to go to an evening party with an escort. Why, you're only fifteen."

"But this is a school party, Mumsie, and it seems different."

"I think so, too," said Trudy. "I went to High School parties with the boys when I was fifteen,—or sixteen, anyway."

"But sixteen seems so much older. Why, Dolly's wearing hair-ribbons yet."

"Well," and Trudy laughed, "they'll allow hair ribbons at a High School dance. Why, Mother, it's part of the course, in a way. It teaches the boys and girls how to behave in Society —"

"Dolly can learn that at home."

"Not unless she has lots of parties and dances, I mean party manners."

"Well, I'm willing she should go, but I don't like her going with Tod Brown."

"Why, he's an awfully nice boy. The Browns are among the best people of Berwick."

"I know that, Trudy,— Tod's all right. But I think your father ought to take Dolly and go after her."

"Oh, Mother, they don't do that nowadays. But Dolly can go in our car, and stop for Tod, that would be all right. And Thomas could go and bring them home."

"That seems to me a very queer way to do. But we'll see what your father says about it."

Mr. Fayre, appealed to, was helpless.

"Why, bless my soul, Edith," he said to his wife, "I don't know about such things. When I was a boy, we went home with the girls, of course. But nowadays I suppose the ways are different. You women folks ought to be able to settle that question."

"They are, Daddy," said Dolly, sidling up to him, and patting his hand. "But I'd just as lieve you'd take me, if you want the bother of it."

"I don't mind the bother, Chickadee, if it's necessary. But when you *do* get old enough to let the Brownies take you to parties, I shan't be sorry!"

"Well, now, I'll settle the matter," said Mrs.

Fayre, smiling at her younger daughter. "This time, let Daddy take you, and the next time we'll see about it. You *are* growing up, I suppose, and, too, one has to do as other people do. But this first dance, I'd rather you went with father."

"All right, Mumsie, I'm willing. I don't s'pose it'll be much of a party anyhow. Just the school girls and boys, you know."

"Oh, I don't know," said Trudy. "When I went to High, dances were pretty nice affairs. What shall she wear?"

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Fayre. "I'll have to ask the mothers of some of the other girls how much they dress. A white frock, I should think, with some flowers or ribbons."

Dolly was satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, but quite another scene was being enacted next door.

"I'm going to the High School Dance with Tad Brown," Dotty announced at the dinner table.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," returned her mother. "A child of your age going out in the evening with a boy escort! Ridiculous!"

"But I *am*," went on Dotty, decidedly. "Dolly's going with Tod, and I'm going with Tad."

"Did Dolly's mother say she might?"

"I dunno. But we're going. And I want a new red chiffon to wear."

"Red chiffon! You'd look fine in red chiffon at your age! Now, be sensible, Dotty, if you go to that dance, you must let your father take you, and you must wear one of your white summer dresses."

"But, Mother, all the girls are going to have new dresses. Celia Ferris is going to have a white satin —"

"A white satin! for a High School girl! How absurd!"

"Well, I don't want white satin, but I *do* want a new dress. Can't I have it, Father?"

"Now, now, Dotty, don't tease."

"But, Father, can't I?"

"Why, *I* should think you might. You're a nice little girl. But, of course, it must be as mother says."

"Say, yes, Mother, do say yes. Won't you, Mother? *Won't* you? Aunt Clara, you *beg* her to, won't you? *Won't* you, Aunt Clara?"

"Good gracious, child, stop teasing," and Mr. Rose glowered at Dotty so very fiercely, that she knew he was not in earnest.

"Stop teasing, Dotty," said Genie, her little sis-

ter. "You know very well that teasing won't get what you want."

Genie looked so comical, as she shook her fat little forefinger at Dotty, that they all laughed.

"Cry, that's the bestest way," Genie went on. "If you cry hard enough, you're sure to get it."

"That's all right for little kiddies like you, Gene, but big girls don't cry. They just say what they want, and then if their parents are nice, loving, affectionate, good-hearted people, I should think they would get their wishes."

"Well put, Dottikins," cried her father. "I guess, Mother, the little girl will have to have her new furbelows. Of course, you'll get something suitable. Say, a nice blue gingham."

Dotty smiled absently at this mild jest, and went on, her first point gained, to her second.

"And I want to go with Tad. I don't want to go with father, like a baby. All the girls are going with the boys. Celia Ferris is going with Lollie Henry —"

"That question must wait, Dorothy," and when Mrs. Rose used that name, Dotty knew she was very much in earnest. "I'm comparatively new in Berwick, and I must find out what the other mothers think about it before I decide. Now, stop teasing;

after I confer with some of the ladies I'll decide. I don't think much of Celia Ferris as a model. And I'm by no means sure Dolly's mother will let her go with Tod. So you must wait and see."

Dotty knew from her mother's manner there was no use teasing any more, so she turned her attention back to her frock.

"Well, if it can't be red chiffon, Mother, can't it be red organdie?"

"We'll see about it. If you're so bent on a red dress, perhaps we can hunt one up." Mrs. Fayre smiled at her impetuous daughter, and Dotty felt sure she had secured a red gown, at least.

The two neighbouring mothers talked matters over, and it was finally decided that the girls should not be allowed to go to the party with the boys this time, but perhaps they might later in the season. For the dances were occasional, and sometimes there were three or four during the winter. It was arranged that Mr. Fayre should take the two D's and that Mr. Rose should go to bring them home, after the dance was over.

But new dresses were allowed, and Dotty's of red organdie, and Dolly's of white organdie and blue ribbons, were both pretty and appropriate.

They had new party cloaks, too, the first they

had ever owned, and it made them feel exceedingly grown-up to have them flung round their shoulders. Dolly's was of light blue cashmere, edged with swansdown, and Dotty's was of scarlet cloth, bordered with a quilling of black satin. Hats were out of the question, and Mrs. Fayre presented each of the girls with a little lace scarf to wear on her head.

Very pretty they looked, as, all equipped at last, they got into the Fayre car, and rolled away. Mr. Fayre gave them alternately, compliments on their appearance and advice as to how to behave.

"Why, Dads," said Dolly, laughing, "any one would think we had never been out before."

"Well, you haven't; that is, to a real evening party."

"No, but we went to a dance down at Surfwood, it can't be so very different."

"No, I suppose not," rejoined Mr. Fayre, and then they were at the School.

The dance was held in the big Assembly Room, and the Committee had decorated it with flowers and palms, so that it had a gala air indeed. The girls went to the cloak room, and as they emerged, the Brown twins met them. Such dressy Brown twins! And indeed, everybody looked different from the schoolmates they were.

"Hello," said Tad; "come on, you're late. The girls are getting their cards all filled up. Here are yours."

The two D's took their Dance Programmes a little shyly. They had never had them before, for this was their first real Dance Party.

"S'pose nobody asks me to dance!" said Dotty, in a sudden fit of shyness.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Dolly, "everybody'll ask you."

"You should worry!" exclaimed Tad, looking at his pretty partner with an appreciative eye. "Here, give me both your cards. I want a lot of dances that I can manage. I'm not much on the fancy steps."

He took the cards and began scribbling his initials.

"Stop!" said Dotty, laughing; "you're taking too many, Tad."

"Oh, ho! and you were so 'fraid nobody'd ask you! You're a sly-boots."

"Well, I want a few left, if anybody *should* ask," and even as she spoke, several of the boys came clustering round her and Dolly, and very soon their cards were well filled.

Then the fun began. The two D's were both

good dancers, and as nearly all the young people went to the Berwick Dancing School, they had plenty of good partners. After each dance they walked about the room or sat and chatted.

To Dolly's surprise there were a great many strangers present. For, contrary to the ideas of the elder Fayres and Roses, nearly all the girls did come with boy escorts, and as many girls were not invited by the schoolboys, they asked friends from out of town. There were also girl guests from neighbouring cities, and altogether, the affair was quite large.

Celia Ferris had her white satin, but it was veiled with soft white tulle, and made a very pretty, girlish dance-frock.

Celia was chummy with the two D's, but she had begun to feel a little jealous of them, for they were exceedingly popular, and received a great deal of attention. However, she was pleasant-mannered, and spoke cordially with them whenever they met.

After a time Dolly noticed a girl, who seemed to be a wall-flower. She was a nice-looking and well-dressed girl, but she danced very seldom, and most of the time sat discontentedly looking at the others.

There were some other wall-flowers, as is always

the case, but none were so frequently left partnerless as this particular girl.

"Who is she?" asked Dolly of Lollie Henry, with whom she happened to be dancing.

"Oh, that's Bernice Forbes. She's a muff."

"Don't be rude, Lollie. What do you mean,— a muff?"

"Nothing, only she hasn't any *go* to her,— any life, any vim, you know."

"But she might, if she were asked to dance oftener. Have you asked her?"

"Not much! I don't dance with B. Forbes, when I can get anybody else."

"That isn't very nice of you," and Dolly looked reproachfully at her partner. "Won't you ask her once, just to please me?"

"I'd do a lot to please you, sister, but B. F. is a little too much. Hello, they're going to supper. Who'd you come with? Tad or Tod?"

"I'm supposed to have come with Tod. But really my father brought me."

"I know. It's all the same. The Brownies picked you up after you got there,— you and Dot. And here comes Tod after you, I must fly to seek my own special."

Lollie went off, and Tod escorted Dolly to the

supper room. The feast was not grand, as High School affairs are limited, but everybody enjoyed it. The D's and the Browns found a place in a pleasant alcove, and were joined by Celia Ferris and the Rawlins girls and a lot more of their particular friends.

Dolly noticed Bernice Forbes, sitting apart from the rest. With her was a boy Dolly did not know.

"Who is he?" she whispered to Joe Collins.

"Dunno. Some chap the Forbes girl brought. Of course no Berwick boy would ask her."

"Why not?"

"Stick. Can't say boo to a goose!"

"Is that the reason the Berwick boys don't want to talk to her?" asked Dolly mischievously, and Joe laughed.

"Honest, Dolly, she's fearful. Just a lump, you know. But don't you know her?"

"Never did till I went to High. She was at another Grammar School from the one I went to. She dresses well."

"She ought to. Her father is the richest man in Berwick."

"Oh, is she the daughter of Mr. Forbes, the railroad man?"

"She sure is. Now do you know her better?"

"I should say so! Why, my father is in one of the offices of Mr. Forbes' company."

"That so? Well, steer clear of the fair Bernice, believe me!"

And then the sandwiches and ice cream and cakes arrived, and the healthy young appetites did full justice to them.

"Tell us all about your new house, Dotty," somebody was saying.

"'Tisn't mine any more than Dolly Fayre's. It belongs to us jointly and severally, as my father says."

"When will it be finished?"

"In a couple of weeks now, I guess. We're going to have a Hallowe'en party to open it. I hope you'll all come."

"Is this the invitation?" said Clayton Rawlins; "if so, I accept."

"Oh, no, this isn't the regular invitation. That will come later."

"You can't have a very big party," said Celia. "The house won't hold very many."

"It's going to be a mixed-around party," explained Dolly. "Some of it will be in our two own houses and some in Treasure House."

"Is that what you call it? How pretty," and Grace Rawlins smiled at Dolly.

"Yes, Treasure House, because it's our treasure and because we're going to keep our treasures in it. Oh, it's going to be the greatest fun! You must all come over and see it. Don't wait for Hallowe'en. Come any time."

After supper there were a few more dances before going home time.

With some interest, Dolly watched the Forbes girl. She danced a few times with the boy with her and the rest of the time she sat alone.

Reggie Stuart came to Dolly for a dance.

"Say, Reg," she said, "won't you let me off of this, and go and dance it with Bernice Forbes?"

"*Will* I! Not! What's the matter, don't you want to dance with me?"

"Yes, of course. It isn't that, but — but she looks lonely."

"Good work! She ought to look lonely. It's her own fault, Dolly."

"Her own fault, how?"

"Oh, she doesn't try to be gay and perky and smiley and laughy,— like,— well, like you are. But if you don't want me for a partner —"

"Oh, ridiculous, Reg! Of course I do. Come on."

They danced away, and for that night at least, Dolly gave up trying to get the boys to dance with Bernice. Reginald was not the first one she had asked, nor the second; but one and all they had refused.

CHAPTER V

TREASURE HOUSE

At last the day came when Treasure House was finished. Painted, papered, furnished, it now lacked only the finishing touches that the eager hands of the Two D's were ready to give.

A Saturday was to be devoted to this fascinating work, and bright and early, Dotty and Dolly were signalling each other from their bedroom windows that the time had arrived.

Rather slim and very hurried were their breakfasts, and very abstracted and absentminded their conversation.

"Dot," said Mr. Rose, "do have a little scrap more of this nice bacon."

Dotty looked at her father, unseeing, and letting her gaze rove to her mother, she said, "Which centrepiece would you put on the table first, Aunt Clara's or the one Trudy made?"

"Use mine first," spoke up Aunt Clara, "for Trudy's is much handsomer, and you'd better keep it for a party occasion."

"That's so," and Dotty nodded her head.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rose had sat patiently, serving fork and spoon held over the dish of curly, crisp bacon and golden eggs. "I asked you a question, Dotty," he said, in an injured tone.

Again Dotty gave him that blank stare. "And, Mother," she went on, "if you'd just as lieve we'd have that blue Japanese table mat, for the Study table, I'll take it over with me. When I —"

"Dorothy Rose," said her father, with mock severity, "*am* I to hold this fork all day? Will you, or will you *not*, have some bacon?"

"What? Have what? Oh, Daddy, *did* you bring the screw hooks home last night? You didn't forget to get them, did you?"

"Bacon! Bacon! *Bacon!*" shouted Mr. Rose. "I said bacon!"

"And the doormat,— you promised to order the doormat, Father —"

"Bacon!"

"The fire sets came —"

"*Bacon!*"

"Oh, how you made me jump! No, I don't want any bacon, I had some — I think. Anyway, I'm through breakfast, aren't you, Dad? Do hurry up. I want you to go over with me — oh, there's Doll!"

Dolly came in, her arms full of things for the house.

"I didn't want to go in without you, Dot," she said. "Goodness, aren't you through breakfast yet? I couldn't eat a thing, hardly."

"Sit down here, and have some bacon, Dolly," said Mr. Rose, hospitably.

"Dad, if you say bacon again, I'll just perfectly fly! Dolly doesn't want any, do you, Doll?"

"No, 'course not! I mean no, thank you, Mr. Rose. Oh, we can't wait another minute. Come on, Dot!"

Dotty grabbed up some things she had ready to take, and the two flew out of the side door and over to Treasure House.

It was a gorgeous morning in late October, and as the house faced the south, the sun was already flooding the front piazza of their new domain. Each girl had a key, and as they went up the steps, Dolly began hunting in her coat pocket for hers.

"Old Slowy!" cried Dotty, and, her own key already in her hand, she snapped it into the lock, and threw open the door.

"Will you walk into my parlour, said the flyder to the spy!" and with a flourish she stood aside for Dolly to enter.

"No, we must go in together. Why, Dot, this first entrance ought to be a rite, a — a ceremonial, you know."

"Ceremonial, your grandmother! Come on in!" and grabbing Dolly's arm, the two bounced in, spilling their parcels, and laughing so hard that there was small suggestion of ceremony.

They fell breathless, in the two easy chairs that stood either side of the fireplace, and just grinned at each other.

"The day's come!" exclaimed Dotty; "we're really here! Oh, Doll, can you believe it?"

"No, I simpully *can't!* It's too good to be true! Now, shall we light a fire, or fix things up first?"

"How far have you progressed?" asked a voice at the door, and Mr. Rose came in, smiling. "Want any help? I've half an hour to spare. Can I start a fire for you?"

"Oh, do, Dad! And show us just how, and then we can do it ourselves after this."

"Pooh," said Dolly, "I know how to make a fire, — I learned long ago. But it would be better to have Mr. Rose make the first one, and see if the chimney draws all right."

Dolly looked up the flue with the air of a connois-

seur on fireplaces, and Mr. Rose laughed good naturedly at her.

"The secret of a successful fire is plenty of paper and kindling-wood," he said, as he twisted newspapers into hard rolls. Then he added light sticks and finally good-sized logs, and declared the fire was laid.

"Now the lighting of this, your first hearth fire, should be a ceremony," he said.

"There, Dotty, I told you we ought to have a ceremony! Which of us will light it?"

"Both together, of course. Give us each a match, Dad."

Mr. Rose gave each of the girls a match, and as they were about to strike them, he showed them where to touch the protruding ends of paper, which he had purposely arranged.

"Now," he said, "One, Two, Three, *Go!* May joy attend all who surround the Hearthstone fires of Treasure House!"

The matches blazed, caught the paper, ignited the kindling, and flames shot up with a glow and a crackle.

It was an exciting moment for the two girls. They fell into each other's arms, and while Dotty was shout-

ing "Hooray!" at the top of her lungs, the tears were rolling down Dolly's cheeks.

"You Goosie!" cried Dotty. "What under the sun are you crying about?"

"'Cause I'm so happy. And anyway, it's my own house, I've got a right to cry in it, if I want to."

But she was smiling now, the tense moment had passed, and together they danced wildly round the room.

"I'll have to be going," said Mr. Rose, looking at his watch, "you two Apache Indians had better calm down and get to work. There's a lot to be done, I'm thinking."

"But we've got all our lives to do it in," said Dolly, laughing. "There's no hurry, and I must get my eyes used to it a little first."

Mr. Rose went off, and the two girls stood looking about, as if they never could look enough.

And this is what they saw. The Study, flooded with the Autumn sunlight, and bright with the blazing fire. Walls hung with plain paper of a lovely greyish green, with a bordering frieze of foliage in darker shades. Windows curtained with green silk over lace bordered scrim. Two wide window-seats, at opposite sides of the room, cushioned in green, and provided with many soft, ample-sized green cushions. The

woodwork was white, the low bookshelves were white, and the furniture was Mission.

The two desks had arrived, and were placed at the two ends of the room. Theoretically, the whole room was divided in halves, Dolly owning the side toward her home, and Dotty the side toward hers. Under the window seats were little cupboards for school books, and besides, there was a roomy coat-closet for each, with shelves and hooks.

A big table in the middle of the room held an electrolier, and each girl was to fill her side of the table with such books or bric-à-brac as she saw fit. Altogether, it was the cosiest, homiest, dearest room a girl ever had to study or play in, and it thoroughly satisfied the Two D's.

"Now let's gaze on the dining-room," said Dolly. "I haven't seen it since last night."

Arms round each other, they went to the next room. That, of course, was a north room, and so it had been furnished in yellow. The yellow wallpaper, with a border of daffodils, was like sunshine, and the chairs and table were of yellow painted wood. The curtains were of thin yellow silk, and the glass door of the cupboard showed a set of yellow china. A big yellow bowl, of Chinese ware, had been Mrs. Fayre's especial gift; though the parents and relatives had all

contributed generously to the furnishings. Bob and Bert had sent gifts; one a clock and one a picture.

Their pictures were few, as yet, for the girls didn't want the discarded ones in their home attics, and preferred to wait till time should bring some good ones as Christmas or birthday gifts.

"You see," said Dolly, as they talked this over, "we don't want to get it all finished at once, or we'll have nothing to look forward to. Let's do it slowly, by degrees, and get first, just what we have to have."

"Yes," agreed Dotty, "only I'm so impatient, I can't wait to do things slowly. I wish I could just wave my hand, and everything would be finished!"

"Goosie! Well, let's go to work, and do up what's to be done right now. Mother's coming over pretty soon, and I want her to see it looking nice. I'll make the dining-room fire,— or don't we need one?"

"Not yet, Doll. We'll be flying round, working, and that will keep us warm. Let's not light it till afternoon."

"All right. Come on and gaze at the kitchen."

The kitchenette was a dream in shining nickel and white enamel. Mr. Fayre was a busy man, and hadn't the time to devote to the children that Mr. Rose could command, so he had insisted on making up

by putting in the entire electrical outfit. There was provision for cooking, toasting, coffee-making, candy-making, and some contraptions of which the girls did not yet know the use.

A small, but complete kitchen cabinet contained everything the most fastidious housekeeper could desire, and a wall cupboard held a supply of neatly hemmed dish towels, dusters and such matters.

"Isn't it great!" exclaimed Dolly. "That white enamelled sink is dainty enough for a fairy's bath! And do observe this corn-popper!"

"And this glass lemon-squeezer! Let's make some lemonade now!"

"Oh, not now! It's just after breakfast."

"Well, it's eleven o'clock, just the same."

"It is! Whew! we must fly round. Don't talk about lemonade, Dot; let's put our books on their shelves, and fix the mantel and table."

"All right, say we do."

A basket of trinkets from each house stood waiting, and the two unpacked and placed their treasures. Such absorbing work as it was! No very valuable things had been brought, lest light-fingered gentry should prowl round some dark night, but lots of pretty things were available.

"'Course we divide the mantel, same's everything

else," observed Dolly, as she came, with a tiny ivory elephant and a larger teakwood one. "Let's put Bert's clock in the middle, and then each fix our own half. I've just got to have my two dearie efelunts here, and the brass candlestick Grandma gave me. There, I think that's enough for my end."

"Looks awful skinny. I've a lot of stuff for my half. See; this pair of vases, and this plaster cast of Dante, and this big white china cat, and this inkstand —"

"Oh, Dot, don't put an inkstand up there! Put that on your desk."

"Oh, it isn't a using inkstand. It's just a show one. Aunt Clara gave it to me last Christmas. See, it's iridescent glass."

"I know it is, but it looks like fury up there, and your end is too crowded, anyway."

"Pooh, I think yours is too skimpy. Looks awful vacant, with nothing but two elephants and a candlestick!"

"But it's right not to have such a lot of dinky doodaddles all over the place. Your end looks like a junk shop!"

But, imperturbably, Dotty added a big, pink-lined conch shell and a fussy beribboned calendar. "I like what I like, Dolly Fayre, and I've as much right to fill

up my space as you have to waste yours. You might rent out a few square feet to me."

"'Deed I won't! Dot, that bunch of rubbish is fierce! All the girls will laugh at it."

"Let 'em, I don't care. I've had that shell ever since I was a tiny mite. It's my oldest treasure."

"Your old-fashionedest, you mean. Say, Dot, weed out half of those frights, and I'll give you one of my candlesticks. They'd look fine at each end."

"No-sir-ee! I insist on my rights, my whole rights and nothing but my rights! E pluribus unum, Erin go bragh!"

Dotty executed a species of war dance, and shook her fist defiantly at Dolly, who was standing off, admiring her end of the mantel and making wry faces at Dotty's.

Suddenly Dolly broke into laughter. "We'll have these scraps all the time, Dot, so I s'pose we may as well make up our minds to let each other do as we please."

"I like your grammar, and I agree to your dic—dic— what do you call it?"

"Dictum?"

"Yes, dictum. Only you needn't try to dictum *me!* We're joint monarchs of all we survey, and we must let each other survey in our own way. I think

my mantel layout is pretty fine. If you don't I can't help it."

"No," sighed Dolly, "and you can't help having awful taste in decoration, either."

"Taste is a matter of opinion, and I opine that my mantel looks as good as yours, only different."

Then both girls grinned at each other, and the peace was unbroken. But the mantel did look funny!

"Now for our books. Thank goodness, we haven't got to share our bookshelves, and we can fix the things as we like."

"We did on the mantel," said Dolly, laughing. "Well, my nonsense books go above, and my girls' books below. 'Alice' first; then 'Lear,' and then the 'Just so Stories.'"

"Well, of course, I'm doing mine different. I'm putting my highbrow books up top. Shakespeare first, and then —"

"Don't say Milton! You know you'll *never* read those things out here, or anywhere. except when you have to write themes on them!"

"But amn't I going to write themes out here? What are our desks for, I'd like to know?"

"Yes, I s'pose so. Oh, well, fix your books as you like; you will anyway."

"'Course I will. And I hereby give you permission to do the same."

"Thank you, oh, *thank* you! It's tiresome work, isn't it?"

"Jiminy! I should say it was! Come on, Doll, let's make some lemonade. I'm choked with dust and with some old dry lingo that leaked out of my wise books. Come on, Dollums."

"All right. Got any lemons?"

"Yep, brought some on purpose. Sugar too. And we can make it in that darling kitchenettio!"

Away the girls went, and concocted lemonade that tasted like fairy nectar. To squeeze lemons by means of their own glass squeezer, to get sugar out of their own sugar-box (after they had put it in), to draw water from their own flashing, shining, silver-plated faucets,— this was joy indeed!

"Seems to me I never tasted anything so good," said Dolly, gazing into her glass, as they sat at their golden dining-room table.

"Nor I. But it makes me so fearfully hungry."

"At one we must go home to lunch, I s'pose. Wish we could lunch here."

"We will next Saturday, but of course, we've got to get a lot of things together to do that."

"It's nearly one, now. We must finish up this

lemonade and scoot. Will you come back right after your lunch is over?"

"Yes, of course. Quick as I can hop here. But I'm so hungry I s'pect I'll eat a whole lot."

"Me too."

CHAPTER VI

SUCH A LUNCHEON!

THE lemonade finished, and the glasses washed and put away, the girls were about to start for home, when along came Trudy and Norah, the Fayres' cook, each with a tray covered with a big, white napkin.

"Oh, goody, *goody*, GOODY!" shouted Dotty, catching sight of them first. "It's lunch to eat over here! It is! It *is!*"

They flung open the front door and as they did so, there appeared from the house on the other side, Aunt Clara and Maria, the Roses' old coloured cook, one carrying a basket, and the other a strange-looking burden, muffled up in a piece of blanket.

"Glory be! but dis yer am hot!" and Maria hurried in with the blanketed bundle, which proved to be a silver pot of cocoa, steaming and fragran

Laughing with glee, the girls relieved the messengers of their loads and put them all on the dining-room table. The callers declined to stay, having a feeling that half the fun of Treasure House was in the Two D's having it to themselves. So away

they went, and with shrieks of delight, the donations were opened.

"Did you *ever* see such a picture!" cried Dolly, as she brought to view a small platter of cold tongue, garnished round with asparagus tips and tiny pickles.

"And gaze on this to go with it!" Dotty said, flourishing a plate of sandwiches, delicate and dainty, and of several varieties.

"Let's eat 'em now, while the cocoa's hot, and anyway, I can't wait."

Dotty seated herself at the table, while Dolly, in her methodical way, went on with the preparations. "I'll put the dessert on this side table," she said. "Don't begin, Dot, till it's all ready. *Will* you look! Here's a Floating Island! Just enough for us two, in Trudy's best glass dish! And Maria's little raisin cakes! Say, Dot, they telephoned or something and arranged this lunch between the two houses."

"'Course they did. *Do* come on, Dolly. Don't stand admiring the things all day. Come on and eat."

"All right, everything is all ready now, and we can eat in comfort. Here's a lovely basket of fruit, but we won't want that for lunch, let's keep it for this afternoon."

"Keep it for Christmas! if you'll only come on! Dolly Fayre, you are so slow, you do exasperate me somethin' awful!"

"Dotty Rose, you are so impatient, you drive me crazy!" but Dolly came, smiling and tranquil, and took her seat at the table.

"Isn't it great!" she said, looking about at the pretty golden room, the tempting feast, daintily set forth, and at eager Dotty, her dark eyes sparkling, and her red lips pouting at Dolly's delay.

"Simpully gorgeous!" and Dotty's pout disappeared as they began the first meal in Treasure House. "I say, Dollum, isn't it funny how we Roses came here and happened to live alongside of you Fayres, and you and I became such chums?"

"Awful funny. And we're such good friends, even though we're so different in every way."

"Not in every way, we like the same things often, but sometimes we're so very different, it makes us seem differenter than we really are."

"Yes, I guess that's it, though I can't exactly follow your meaning. My, but these sandwiches are good! Let's have lunch here every Saturday, shall us? Of course, we'll fix the things ourselves. We couldn't expect Trudy and your Aunt Clara to do it,— only this first time. But Norah and Maria will

make things for us, and we can do a lot ourselves. I mean to learn to cook,— not so much cook on the stove, you know,— as to make sandwiches and salads and desserts and deviled eggs and —"

"And cocoa — and oh, Dollyrinda, some Saturday we'll ask somebody to lunch, and we'll make all the things ourselves!"

"And, oh, Dotsie, when the boys come home for Thanksgiving, maybe we won't have fun! Brother Bert is crazy to see this house."

"And Bob is, too. I expect those two brothers of ours will just take possession of it."

"'Deed they won't! But of course they can come here all they want, and if they want to borrow it for a boy racket of their own, why of course we'll let 'em."

"Well, isn't that pretty much taking possession, I'd like to know! Have some more cocoa?"

"You mustn't say, 'Have some *more*' anything. You ought to say, 'Have some cocoa?'"

"But you've already had some!"

"I know it. But that's good manners. You must ignore the fact of my having had any."

"Pooh! Well, Miss Fayre, as you haven't had any cocoa, to my knowledge, mayn't I beg you to try it?"

"Since you put it so politely, I don't care if I do take another cup or two. You see, *I* don't have to ignore it, I own right up."

"You and your manners are too much for me!"

"But, honestly, Dotty, it is right not to put in the 'more.' And you mustn't do it."

"All right, I won't. But it's simply impossible for me to ignore the dozens of sandwiches you've eaten. So I'll say, Have some cake?"

"As the sandwiches are all gone, I believe I will begin on the cake. But, somehow, I don't feel as hungry as I did. Do you?"

"Nixy. Say, Doll, here's an idea! S'pose we save these cakes,— there's a lot of them,— and that big basket of fruit till this afternoon and invite the two Rawlins girls over. How about it?"

"All right, I'll go you. For, honest, I can't eat any of it now. But we'll eat up Trudy's Floating Island, she makes it lovely, and there isn't such a lot of that."

"All right. If we're going to ask those girls, we must get a move on and do up these dishes. I hate to do dishes, don't you?"

"Yes, at home. But it isn't so bad here. It's kind of fun!"

"Not very much fun. But anyway, the dishes that belong over to our homes, we can pile in this basket, and Maria will come for them."

"They've got to be washed first, though. It isn't nice to send them back unwashed."

"Oh, what a prim old maid! You ought to live alone with a cat and a poll parrot!"

"That isn't old-maidness, that's just plain, every-day tidiness. Now you get a dish towel, and I'll wash, and we'll have these things out to rights in a jiffy."

The girls knew how, and they did their work well, but it did take some time, for such work cannot be done too swiftly. But on the whole, they enjoyed the task, and were gratified at the sight of the shining glass and china in their own glass-cupboard, and the neatly packed basket and tray full of dishes to be returned to their home pantries.

Then they went and sat before their Study fire, to rest and talk.

"Seems to me," said Dolly, "time does go awful fast. Here it's after three o'clock, and the afternoon is 'most gone."

"And we must go home and dress," said Dotty, "if we're going to have Grace and Ethel. These ginghams won't do."

"No, not in our pretty new house! Well, let's go home and dress, and then we can telephone them, from home. Shall I do it, or you?"

"Oh, I'll do it. You'll have all you can do to get dressed in time to get back here before dark. You're so everlasting slow."

"Slow and sure, as the molasses said to the quicksilver. All right, you telephone the Rawlinses, and if they can't come, what then? Shall we ask any one else?"

"Might ask Maisie May. But we don't want a lot. It'll seem too much like a party, and besides, there won't be enough cakes to go round."

"All right. If the Rawlinses can't come you call up Maisie, and if she can't, we'll flock by ourselves. Maybe Mother'll want me to go out with her somewhere, anyway. You never can tell."

"Oh, don't do that! If you do, I'll get the girls to come just to see me. And it would be horrid not to be together this first day."

"Well, I s'pect I can come back. Say, Dot, we ought to have a telephone connection here."

"Wish we could, but, you know when we spoke of it, Dad said we couldn't have everything all at once. Let's strike for it for Christmas."

"All right. But I s'pose we can just as well run

over home to telephone. Now, you take your folkses' basket and I'll take our trays. Got your key?"

"Yes. Have you? I'll lock the door. You go on. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," and both girls ran away home.

Mrs. Fayre had intended to have Dolly go on an errand with her, but, hearing of the projected plan, she let the child off.

"Go over to Treasure House, dear, if you like," she said; "but some days I must claim you as my own little girl. I don't want to lose you entirely."

"No, Mumsie," said Dolly, her arms around her mother's neck, "but Saturdays, you know,— can't I always have Saturdays for the House?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Now go and dress. And be home by dinner time, Trudy expects company."

"Yes'm," and Dolly scampered away to dress. She heard the telephone and went to answer, thinking it might be Dotty, And it was.

"The Rawlins girls are coming," Dotty said, "and Maisie happened to be at their house so I had to ask her too. There'll be cakes enough if we go light ourselves."

"All right. I'll be over pretty soon. Good-bye."

Dolly made a leisurely toilette, as she always did. She rarely moved quickly, but on the other hand, she

was not often late. She put on a pretty little voile frock, of bluet blue, with white pipings. A big white ribbon bow tied her hair back, and then it fell in a long braid, with curly ends. She threw a big cloak round her, one of Trudy's discarded party-cloaks, and ran across to Treasure House.

Of course, Dotty was already there. She had on a dress of bright Scotch plaid, which suited her type. Scarlet ribbons on her hair, and a necklace of bright red beads made her look quite festive.

"What a jolly cloak! Trude's?"

"It was, but she gave it to me. Just the thing to wear to run over here. It's warm, but it's handy."

"It's dandy, you mean. Wish I had one. I guess I can bamboozle Mother or Auntie into making me one. You look awfully nice this afternoon. Why didn't you wear your blue beads?"

"They don't quite match this frock. They're too greenishly blue. Why did you wear those red ones?"

"'Cause they *do* match this dress."

"No, they don't. They're crimson and the red in the plaid is scarlet."

"Oh, what a fuss! Well, then, I wore 'em 'cause they're pretty and becoming and I like 'em,— so there now!"

"All right, glad you do. Here come the girls."

Further discussion of tints and shades was cut short by the entrance of Grace and Ethel Rawlins and Maisie May.

"Well, if this isn't the greatest place! I never heard of such a thing before. Where did you get the idea?"

"Oh, it's just heavenly! Such lovely furniture and things!"

"And there's another room! Why, a dining-room! I *never* did!"

Exclamations drowned each other. The visitors went in each of the three rooms and each called forth new praises. It was indeed a novelty, and appealed to the girls' hearts as a most desirable and cosy place to read or study.

"But *can* you study here?" asked Maisie. "I should think you'd be all the time thinking what to do next to fix it up, and you couldn't put your mind on your lessons."

"It may be that way," laughed Dolly. "We haven't really tried it yet. You see we only moved in this morning. Not everything is to rights yet. We don't mind you girls seeing it before it's all done, but I want it in apple-pie order before we have the Hallowe'en party."

"Come on," said Dotty, "let's gather round the Study fire, and talk over the party. Hallowe'en isn't so very far away."

The girls drew up chairs for some and cushions from the window-seats for some, and grouped themselves comfortably before the fire. Dolly put on a log from time to time, for she was one of those rare creatures who are born with a sense of fire-building, as others are born with a sense of colour or rhythm. She always knew just where to poke the dying logs, and where to lay the fresh ones. Dotty had promised not to touch it, for she had a fatal propensity for putting the fire out, or at least causing it to die down.

"Oh, it's ideal!" exclaimed Grace; "I do envy you girls this place. I wish we could have one, but Father wouldn't hear of it. He'd think it cost too much."

"It didn't cost such an awful lot, my father says," said Dolly. "But, you know it isn't always cost that counts. Lots of things are unusual, and that makes people think they are impossible. Your father could afford one, Grace, if he wanted to. You see, it could be built much cheaper than this one. You needn't really have but one room and then — my goodness! What's that?"

For a regular hullabaloo was heard outside. Knocking at the door, tapping at the windows, even pounding on the house itself!

Dotty looked out.

"It's the boys!" she said, and her voice was as of one who announces a dire calamity.

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Dolly. "What shall we do? I didn't want them this afternoon."

"Tell 'em they can't come in," said Maisie. "It isn't fair."

"Yes," agreed Grace. "Just open the door, and tell them they must wait till next week. I'll tell them, if you want me to. My brother Clayton is there, and I'll make him take the others away."

"I'll go to the door," said Dotty. "I can make them go away. If Doll goes, she'll be so good-natured she'll let them in. And we haven't enough — well, that is,— we don't want them to-day."

The noise continued, and the boys were now peeping in at the windows, and making signs of impatience.

Dotty and Grace opened the door, intending to persuade the would-be visitors to depart in peace, but the boys entered in a sort of flying wedge. It would have taken far more than two girls to keep them out. They were by no means rude or boister-

ous, but they were so determined to come in,— that they just came.

"Whew!" shouted Lollie Henry, "if this isn't a peach of a place! How do do, Dolly and Dotty! I suppose you're hostesses. Yes, we *will* come in, thank you! De-lighted."

And all the other boys,— and there were half a dozen of them,— joined the acclamation.

"Looky here at the dining-room! Well, maybe we aren't swell! Wowly-wow-wow! See the dinky little kitchen-place! What do you cook, girls? Oh, no, thank you, we *can't* stay to supper. Oh, no, we *really* can't. *So* sorry! Still, of course, if you *insist* —"

The Two D's gave in. The boys were so honestly interested and admiring, and they wanted to see everything so much that the hostesses couldn't bear to turn them out, and indeed, they couldn't turn them out if they had tried. So they let them stay, ungrudgingly, and after viewing the whole domain, the entire company surrounded the Study fire once more. The boys mostly sat on the floor, but that made it all the merrier.

"I'll tell you the honest truth," said Dolly, a little later. "We've got enough cakes and fruit for one piece all round, if that will satisfy you, all right."

"Ample!" declared Tod Brown. "I *never* eat more than one piece of fruit. A small quarter of an apple, or a section of an orange is a great sufficiency for my delicate appetite."

The others rejoined with similar nonsense, and the scant refreshments were brought out and divided fairly, amid much laughter, and generous attempts at self denial.

And so the opening day at Treasure House passed off in great glee and merriment, and every guest was well pleased with the entertainment.

CHAPTER VII

FUNNY UNCLE JIM

THROUGH the ensuing week the girls used Treasure House for study hours; and too, they finished up much in the way of furnishing. They were not both there every day, and sometimes neither was there, but the House was a great comfort, and soon they felt greatly at home in it.

"It's getting fitted to us, like a shoe," declared Dotty after a few days. "At first, I didn't like the feel of this chair. Now, I love it."

"Isn't it funny how you get used to things," said Dolly, musingly. "But you can't always. I'm trying to get used to Bernice Forbes, and yet somehow, I can't like her, and I don't know why."

"Of course you can't, Dolly. She isn't our sort." And Dotty shook her head as if she had settled the question for all time.

"Oh, pshaw! Our sort! What is our sort, I'd like to know. She's just as good as we are, just as rich, just as fashionable —"

"Oh, I don't mean those things. She's richer

than any of our set, and fashionabler, too. But that doesn't make her our sort."

"Well, what does? if you know so much."

"She's too stuck-up, for one thing. But that isn't the main thing. She's a — oh, I don't know how to express it. But she hasn't any gumption, or any, — oh, any sense. But she *thinks* she has, and it's *that* that makes her so disagreeable."

"I don't think you're altogether right, but I'm going to find out. I don't see why nobody likes her."

"But you ought to see that if nobody does like her, it's because she isn't likable, for some reason or other."

"I do see that, and I'm going to find out that some reason or other."

"Pitch in, and find out, then. Good luck to you! Oh, here comes Grace."

"Thought I'd find you here," said Grace Rawlins, as Dotty opened the door to her. "Hello, Dolly, busy studying?"

"Just about to begin to think about getting at it," returned Dolly, laughing. "But it can wait; sit down, Gracie."

"Can't stay a minute. I just flew in to ask you two to go nutting to-morrow, up at Uncle Jim's woods."

"Gorgeous! I'd love to go," cried Dotty and Dolly echoed, "So would I!"

"Well, it's just only us and Ethel and Maisie. I can't ask any more, 'cause Uncle is going to send for us in his car, and he'll send us home again. Won't it be fun?"

"Fine! I can do all my lessons to-night, can't you, Doll?"

"I will, whether I can or not. What time do we start, Grace?"

"One o'clock, sharp. Be ready, won't you? And don't wear too good clothes, it's a real country place."

"All right, we'll wear our oldest."

Grace went away, declaring she wouldn't longer interfere with their study, and the Two D's set to work in earnest.

"Then we can't have lunch over here to-morrow," Dotty said, a bit regretfully.

"No matter, there are lots of other Saturdays. I'd rather go nutting while we can."

"So would I. Now keep still, I've got to attack these Geometry problems."

"Thank goodness, I've done mine. But History still stares me in the face."

Silence settled down upon them, broken occasion-

ally by a murmur of this sort: "Ptolemy I was followed by a series of monarchs — by a series of monarchs — what are you going to wear, Dotsie?"

"That old brown gingham — the cube root of $xy - \frac{364}{2}$ —"

Dolly burst into laughter. "X square plus seven X plus fifty-three equals eleven thirds!" she quoted.

Dotty laughed back and quoted their favourite "Hunting of the Snark."

> "Taking three as the number to reason about —
> A convenient number to state —
> We add Seven and Ten and then multiply out
> By One Thousand diminished by Eight.
> The result we proceed to divide, as you see,
> By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
> Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be —"

"Must be what, Dolly?"

"Exactly and perfectly true," said Dolly, who was only half listening, but who knew her Lewis Carroll by heart. Her eyes were turned up to the ceiling and she was gabbling over and over — "by a series of monarchs also called Ptolemies down to the time of Queen Cleopatra, the last of the line. By a series of Ptolemies — a series of Ptolemies also called monarchs, — h'm — also called Cleopatra —

no, also called — also called — oh, what *were* the old things called?"

"You're nutty!" said Dotty. "No, my child, that isn't slang, I mean you're thinking of the nutting party and you can't get the series of mummies straight in your head."

"They weren't mummies —"

"They were after they stopped being monarchs, weren't they? All Egyptians were,— I mean, all fashionable Egyptians. Do keep still, dear, sweet Dollyrinda, *do* keep still. The cube root of xy,— *Oh!* — I do abhor, detest, despise, abominate these cubed XY's!"

But having thus exploded her wrath, Dotty set to work in earnest and finally conquered the refractory factors.

"Done!" she announced, at the end of a half hour of hard work. "I've cubed everything in sight, and some roots that were hidden deeply and darkly in the earth."

"You ought to be a Cubist, that we read so much about in the papers."

"No, thank you. I'll cube what I have to, but I'll never go out cubing, for pleasure. How are your Ptolemies?"

"Awfully mixed up. I'm going to let them sim-

mer over night, and get up early and attack them with the dew on them. Perhaps I can lash 'em to the mast then."

The next day turned out to be an ideal piece of weather. Clear, cold, the wind tossing white drifts of cloud about in the upper blue, and descending to whisk the nuts off the trees for those who desired them. The wind was aided and abetted by Uncle Jim's men, and when the crowd of girls arrived, there was a widespread area of nut-besprinkled ground awaiting them.

"Well, this is some sort of a nutting party," said Dolly, as, each with a basket, they started to the fray. "All I've been on lately, meant hunting around half an hour for three small nuts,— one wormy."

"Oh, Dolly, what a sad experience," Grace returned. "I'm so glad I brought you up here to Brazil, where the nuts come from."

"It's sure some little old Brazil, all right," agreed Dotty, and then they all stooped to their task.

Baskets were quickly filled, and the girls sat down to rest under a tree.

"This must be the old original spreading Chestnut Tree," said Maisie. "I always wondered if it did really spread such a lot. I see it does."

"Here comes the spread!" said Grace, as a maid appeared bearing a tray filled with glasses and plates. The contents were sweet cider and ginger cakes, and to the hungry girls they looked very good indeed.

"But we must be getting home," said Ethel. "I promised Mother we'd be back by five or six, at latest."

"We can't go till Uncle Jim sends us," said Grace. "I told him we wanted to leave at four, but he only said 'Oh, shucks!'"

"Where is he?" asked Dolly. "And isn't there any Aunt Jim?"

"No, he's a bachelor. Lives here alone, except for the servants. The truth is, he's a little shy before a lot of strange girls. Guess I'll go and hunt him up."

She ran away to the house, and Ethel explained further: "You see, he's Mother's uncle. Quite an old man. And old-fashioned in his ways, except that he has a motor-car and a telephone. But personally, he's as backwoodsy as Methuselah; but a dear old thing, and awfully kind-hearted."

Grace came back in triumph, leading Uncle Jim. Pushing and pulling him, rather, for the old man was clearly unwilling to come.

"Now, now, Pussy, whatyer want to drag an old

man like me out here fur? These city young misses don't wanter see me!"

"Yes, we do, Uncle Jim," called out Ethel, and they all echoed, "Yes, we do, Uncle Jim!"

"Well, well, what a perty lot o' young misses. And have you all got all the nuts you want?"

"Yes, indeedy!" cried Dolly. "All we can carry, and more too. And we're ever and ever so much obliged."

"Not at all, not at all! Ye're welcome to all and more. It's a sight to see young things runnin' around the old place. Why don't ye bring 'em up oftener, Gracie?"

"Only waiting for an invitation, sir," and Dotty's sparkling black eyes laughed into the old face.

"Shucks, now! Well, I hereby invite ye, one and all, to come up here jest whenever ye like, and raise hob."

"Good!" cried Maisie. "I just love to raise hob! Let's come next week, girls, when those other nuts are ripe."

"Do, now jest *do!*" said the old man, delightedly. "This old place don't get sight of chick nor child very often. Must ye be goin' now? Well, mind now, ye're to come agin next week. Make a day of it, and bring more of yer young friends. I'll see to

it that Sary makes ye some good old-fashioned doughnuts, and apple turnovers."

"Look here, Uncle Jim, I've an idea," and Ethel ran to him and laid her hand impressively on his arm.

"Fer the land's sake, Ethel, ye don't say so!" and Uncle Jim shook with laughter at his own wit. "A little gell like you with an idea! Sho, sho, now. Come, out with it! It might fester!"

"Now don't you tease me. But it's just this. S'pose we come up here on Hallowe'en and have a witch party."

"My patience! what an idea for a little gell to have! Now, lemme see,— lemme see."

"No, that's too much trouble for you, Uncle Jim," said Grace. "You oughtn't to have proposed it, Ethel."

"No, now, wait a minnit, Gracie. Don't you be too hasty. 'Tain't no trouble atall, I wasn't thinkin' of that. I was thinkin' if I could make things nice and perty fer you young misses. That's the trouble. I'm plain, you see, plain, and —"

"Now, that's just what we want, Uncle Jim, just the plain house, and orchard. We'll do all the fixing up, ourselves."

"Now, now, wait a minnit, I tell you. Don't go

so everlastin' fast. I can't keep up with you. Here's the trick. You have your mother come up in the arternoon, and she can help me put things a leetle mite to rights. Then me and Sary and Etty can do the rest."

"Oh, Mother'll be glad to come. How about it, girls?"

"Why, we were going to have a Hallowe'en party, ourselves," said Dotty, smiling as she saw Dolly's look of consternation.

"I know it; but don't you think this would be more fun, in the country, you know. Don't you, Dolly? We won't do it, if you say not," and Grace looked embarrassed, "but I thought your party was more like a house-warming for your new playhouse, and so —"

"All right, I say," and Dotty turned to Dolly. "Whatcha think, Dollops? Speak out in meetin'! If you don't want to come up here, say so."

"I do," said Dolly, her face clearing. She couldn't think as rapidly as Dotty, and it took her a minute or two to readjust her plans. "It will be heaps of fun. Are you sure you want us,— Uncle Jim?" The blue eyes looked up into his own, and Uncle Jim said heartily, "You bet I do! Every one here, and a half a dozen more perty young misses,

and then boys enough to go round, can you get that many?"

"Oh, yes, we'll ask all our crowd, and fill up with some of the others. What fun! I'm sure Mother will be pleased, she loves to come up here."

"All right, Gracie, girl, you talk it over with her, and I'll be down in a few days, and we'll see about it."

"Can we go in the house, Uncle, and see how it is for a party?"

"Sure and sartain! Go right along, the hull pack o' ye. Browse around, and see the hull shack, and by then, I'll be ready to send ye home. Go right in the kitchen door. Sary, she's the cook, 'll be glad to see you, and Etty, that's her darter, 'll show ye round."

The girls went to the kitchen door, not quite so sure of Sary's warm welcome as their host was. But they found he was right.

"Well, for the land's sake! What a delegation! Come in. Miss Grace and Miss Ethel, and bring your friends. Excuse my untidiness. I wasn't noways expecting company."

The apology was wholly unnecessary, for everything in Sary's kitchen was spick and span and shining. She was a buxom woman of middle age, and

had a broad, smiling face, overflowing with good nature. Her daughter, Etty, was the one who brought them their cakes and cider, and she was shy, but exceedingly curious to see the city ladies,— as the girls seemed to her.

She conducted them all over the fine old farmhouse, and listened in surprise as they exclaimed in wonder and delight over the big open fireplaces, and old mahogany furniture, that seemed to her the most uninteresting and commonplace affairs.

"Perfectly gorgeous!" cried Dotty. "Oh, Grace, I'd ever so much rather have the Hallowe'en party here. Wouldn't you, old Dollypops?"

"Yes, of course. And we can just as well have any other sort of a party at Treasure House."

"Course we can. And we will. After this affair is over. I say, girls, let's have it a masquerade!"

"Oh, let's!" said Maisie. "I've a dress all ready to wear. It's a witch dress, all —"

"I think we ought all to dress as witches," interrupted Grace. "Or spooks or hobgoblins or —"

"That's all right," put in Dotty, "but the boys won't do it. They hate dressing up."

"Let 'em stay away, then."

"No, a Hallowe'en party without boys is no fun. They make up the tricks and jokes, you know."

"That's so," said Dolly, "but if you tell the boys they can't come unless they wear spooky rigs, they'll do it fast enough. Why, a sheet and pillowcase ghost-rig is good enough, and that's no trouble at all! Don't you know Dot, we wore them up at Crosstrees last summer, and the boys didn't mind a bit."

"Yep, that's so. Oh, the boys will come. You couldn't keep them away. What a fireplace to roast chestnuts or pop corn!"

They were in the dining-room now, and its enormous stone fireplace was indeed ideal for a Hallowe'en frolic. And the kitchen, too, offered enchanting possibilities. Then there was the orchard, if any one dared try fortunes beneath the stars. Altogether it was a splendid chance and the Two D's were glad to lay aside their own half formed plans for these.

On the way home, they talked it over, and as they drew near the Roses' house the D's asked the other girls to come in and talk some more.

"I can't," said Grace, "I promised Mother, Ethel and I would get home early. It's a little after five now."

"Then you come in, Maisie," said Dolly. "We'll make fudge. You can stay till six, can't you?"

"Yes, indeed, and I'm simply starving for fudge."

CHAPTER VIII

A STRANGE INTRUDER

"I *do* think this is the dearest place," said Maisie, as they went in the door of Treasure House. "I never heard of such a thing before. Whose plan was it?"

"Our two fatherses, mostly," replied Dotty. "Wait a minute, girls, till I switch on the light."

In a moment a small side light pierced the gloom, but before she could turn on the larger light, Dotty gave a scream.

"Oh," she fairly shrieked, "what is that? who is it?"

"Who is what?" cried Dolly following her in, and Maisie came quickly after.

Then they saw what she meant. Somebody or something lay on the floor. Something like a person, but still and unmoving.

"It's a woman!" screamed Dotty, as she peered down into a veiled white face. "Oh, who can it be? How did she get here?"

Always excitable, Dotty was now fairly beside her-

self with fear and alarm, and not daring to touch the prostrate figure, she shuddered and fell back against the wall.

"*I* can't look! What is it?" and Dolly clapped her hands over her eyes, and refused to take them down. "See what it is, Maisie, won't you?"

"No. I don't see why I — I sh-should, when you and D-D-Dotty won't," and Maisie cowered in another corner.

Dolly peeped out from between her fingers. Maisie had fallen in a heap on a window-seat, and was shaking with nervous fear. Dotty was staring at the woman on the floor, but was now showing more curiosity than terror. Dolly glanced at the still form lying there.

"Is she — is she d-dead?" she faltered.

"Ridiculous!" cried Dotty, "of course not. She — she just stepped in here, and — and f-fainted!"

"Oh," and Dolly became hysterical. "That's like a f-funny story Father tells, ab-bout the man who called at a house and said, 'P-please let me have a f-f-fit in your hall'!"

"If he stuttered as much as you do, I guess he had a chill instead of a fit," giggled Dotty, and then Maisie roused herself.

"Let's lift her up," she said; "I'm not afraid.

Come and help me." She took a few steps nearer the woman, and then catching another look at the face she cried, "Oh, I can't! She looks so queer!"

"Queer, how?" and Dotty's ever-ready curiosity overcame her repugnance, and she drew near to look in the half-hidden face. "If I dared lift her veil —" she bent over, and drew back instantly. "Oh, girls, her face is cold, stone cold!"

"Then she's dead!" wailed Dotty. "I told you so! Dead in our pretty house!"

"Well, if the poor lady is dead, she can't harm us. Let's lift her up," and Maisie, with returning courage, put her hand under the mop of grey hair, which was partly hidden beneath a dark felt hat. But again, the strange, eerie sensation of touching an inert form overcame her and pulling her hand away, she ran back to the window-seat. "I can't! I thought I could, but I can't. Oh, what shall we do?"

"I s'pose we'll have to go and get somebody," said Dolly dolefully. "Shall I go, and you two stay here, or who —"

"Don't you go and leave me here alone with Maisie!" screamed Dotty. "I won't let you, Dolly. Maisie, you go and get somebody, and Dolly and I will stay here."

Maisie started, but on opening the door, and peering out, she flew back, slamming the door hard.

"What is it?" cried both girls. "What did you see?"

"Oh, oh!" and Maisie shivered and shook.

"Tell us, what's out there? What did you see out there?"

"Oh, n-n-othing. But it's so dark! I'm afraid to go out. There may be more of them —"

"More people wanting to have a fit in our hall?" said Dotty, who never could fail to see the ridiculous side of anything.

"Don't, Dot," implored Dolly. "*Don't* talk like that! Maybe she is d-dead, you know."

"Maybe? Why, of *course* she is! She doesn't breathe or move at all. Of course she's dead, Dolly. We've got to go and get somebody. Suppose we all go. It's awful to leave her here alone, but what can we do?"

"Oh, we oughtn't all to leave her. Maybe she'll come to."

"She can't if she's dead, can she?"

"Well, wait a minute. You always fly off so quick, Dotty. Let me think. Let's all sit down here and think a minute."

Dolly pulled the two girls down beside her on a

window-seat. They looked at the silent, motionless form. The woman lay on her side, her hands under her. Her feet in old buttoned shoes stuck out beneath a shabby skirt of dark cloth, frayed at the edges. She wore a big, dark coat of rough cloth. Her hat was held on by a thick veil through which they could quite plainly see her face. She had a very white complexion, but very red cheeks, and staring wide-open blue eyes.

Her grey hair was frowsy and half tumbling down, and round her neck was an old black feather boa. Altogether she looked poorly dressed but her face gave promise of being pretty.

"I've got to see her better," declared Dotty, as Dolly's cogitation had promised no suggestions. "I've just simply *got* to! Maisie, will you help lift her head, if I'll help?"

"Yes, I will," said Maisie, decidedly; "I won't flinch this time."

Dotty went over and knelt at the woman's side. Maisie knelt at her head. "Now," said Dotty, "I'll put my hands under her shoulders and you put yours beneath her head, and we'll sit her up. Maybe — well,— maybe she isn't — you know."

Gently Dotty put her hand under the old cloth

coat, carefully Maisie passed her hand again under the grey hair.

"Now!" said Dotty, and as they lifted, the grey hair came off in Maisie's hand, and — the head of the woman rolled away from the body! All three girls shrieked, and then Dotty began to scream with laughter.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh, that naughty little thing! Oh, how could she! Girls, girls, it isn't a woman, it's a dummy thing that horrid little Genie fixed up to tease us! She ought to be punished for this! But we *were* well taken in!"

The other two began to realise at last what Dotty meant. Sure enough, the grey hair was a wig, or rather, what is known as a "Transformation." The head was a plaster cast, nearly life size, and the body of the supposed woman was a small bolster dressed in old clothes. The shoes were merely tucked under the edge of the skirt.

Dotty lifted up the head and pulled off the veil. "It's my old cast of the head of the Milo Venus," she said. "See, that little scamp has painted the cheeks and lips red, and the eyes blue, and left the rest white. No wonder she looked pale!"

"And with that veil on, it sure did look like a per-

son," said Maisie. "Well she had the joke on us, all right! I was scared out of my wits!"

"So was I," whispered Dolly, who was still shaking; "and I can't get over it. It was awful!"

"Oh, pooh!" said Dotty, "I was scared too. But I fully expect to get over it! I think we all will! Don't worry, Doll, a pan of fudge will calm your nerves."

"Oh, it's too late to make fudge. I want to go home."

"Stay right where you are, sister. A few more bright lights, and a fudge-fest will make a new Dolly of you."

As she talked, Dotty was switching on lights all over the house, getting out chocolate and the chafing-dish, and, making signs to Maisie to perk up and be gay.

Maisie took the hint, and in a short time, there was excellent fudge ready for three merrily laughing girls.

Dotty felt the responsibility of the thing, for it was her sister who was the culprit. She recognised the cast and also the clothing and the wig, and she knew it could have been no one else but the mischievous Genie. So she did all she could to remove

the shadow of unpleasantness that hung round the performance, and she succeeded admirably.

Naturally, the talk turned to the Hallowe'en party.

"I suppose Grace and Ethel will make out the list of invitations," said Dotty.

"It won't take much making out," was Maisie's idea. "They'll just ask our crowd and that will be about enough. Us five who were there to-day, and Celia, and six boys, will be twelve. That's plenty."

"I wish she'd ask Bernice Forbes," said Dolly, doubtfully, "but I s'pose she won't."

"I s'pose she won't, too," said Dot. "Pooh, who wants Bernice Forbes?"

"I don't, for one," asserted Maisie. "I can't bear the girl."

"I don't see why," argued Dolly. "She would be all right if people would be nice to her."

"All right? She *can't* be all right," and Dotty shook her head. "She don't know *how* to be all right."

"That's so," and Maisie laughed. "Well, I must go home, girls. I've had a lovely fudge party, and I think Genie's joke was a great success. Tell her so, for me, Dotty."

"All right, I will," and with laughing good-byes,

Maisie went home and the Two D's stayed to put things straight. It was their rule never to leave Treasure House untidy over night. Dotty whistled and Dolly sang, as they flew around and soon had things ship-shape.

"Now, Dot," said Dolly, as they poked out the dying embers of the fire, "I want to tell you something. I'm going to ask Grace to ask Bernice to that party."

"No, you're not, Dollyrinda. You think so now, but you go home and think it over, and you'll see that you'll spoil the whole party if you do."

"You mean spoil it for *you!* It won't for anybody else. Not everybody is as mean as you are to that girl!"

"Nobody likes her, you've often said so yourself."

"All the more reason, then, to have her there and let them learn to like her."

"Oh, good gracious! you make me tired! Why are you so everlastingly gone on her? Just because she's rich?"

"Dotty Rose, you take that back! That's a mean thing to say, and you *know* it isn't true. *Don't* you?"

"Well, I never knew you to care for anybody for that reason before; but I can't think of any other."

"Well, that *isn't* the reason, and you know it perfectly well. Now, I'll tell you what the reason is, if you can understand it, and I don't know as you can. It's because I'm sorry for her. Everybody snubs her, and she'd just love to be liked and sought after."

"Oh, she *would*, would she? Then why doesn't she make herself liked and sought after?"

"How can she, if we don't give her a chance?"

"Let her make her own chance."

"But, she can't, Dotty. If no one invites her anywhere, how can she make herself agreeable and pleasant to them?"

"Let her give a party herself, and invite us."

"I've no doubt she'd be glad to, if she thought we'd go to it. But if we snub her right and left, she won't dare ask us."

"Well, let her be more pleasant at school, then. She's stuck-up and proudy, and she thinks she's the whole world. Oh, let up, Dolly! what do you want to bother with her for? There are enough in our crowd already. And we just plain don't want her."

"Dot, you're horrid. Can't you feel sorry for her? Put yourself in her place. How would you feel if everybody turned the cold shoulder to you?"

"I'd be so gay and merry they'd *have* to like me."

"Oh, that's all very well, because everybody *does* like you. But if they snubbed you, what then?"

"Why, Dollops, if I deserved it, I'd have to grin and bear it, I s'pect. But facts is facts. You can't make Bernie Forbes over, and unless you can, you can't make people like her, and that's all there is about it. And another thing, Doll. I know and you know your high and noble aim in this matter, but the others don't, and wouldn't believe it if they did. You go on like this, and people will soon be saying that you're toadying to Bernice Forbes just because she's the richest girl in town. And you'll see what they'll think of that!"

"Pooh, I don't care if they do. Bernice hasn't any mother, and her father is a stern, grumpy old thing, and I *am* sorry for her, and I *am* going to do anything I can to help her have a good time, and I *am* going to coax Grace Rawlins to ask her to the Hallowe'en party! So there, now, Miss Dorothy Rose, you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

When Dolly was in earnest, she was very much so, and Dotty well knew there was no use combating her in this mood. So she changed her tactics, and said, laughingly, "Well, don't let *us* quarrel about it anyway. And it's time to go home now. Come on,

"No, I won't come on, till you say you'll help me in my plan. If you and I both ask Grace to ask Bernie, she'll do it. But if I ask her, and then you go to her, and ask her *not* to, she *won't* do it. And I know that's *just* what you'll do!"

As a matter of fact, that was exactly what Dotty *had* intended to do. In fact, she had already planned in her quick-working mind, to telephone the moment she got home, to Grace, and ask her *not* to consent to Dolly's request. It wasn't that Dotty had such rooted objections to Bernice, but she *was* unattractive and stiff, and, moreover, exceedingly critical. And too, Dotty didn't care so especially about the party, but she didn't want Bernice included in the six girls who made up "their crowd," and if Dolly took her up so desperately, first thing they knew, she would be in the "crowd" and she would be all the time coming to Treasure House, and — here was the rub,— Dotty feared, way down deep in her inmost heart, that Bernice might cut her out with Dolly, and that would be the crowning tragedy! It was scarcely possible, of course, but Dolly took strange notions sometimes, and Dotty was taking no chances on such a catastrophe.

"All right, I'll promise not to say anything to Grace at all, about it. But I won't promise to coax

her to ask Bernice, for I don't want her to. Aw, Dollyrinda, let up on that crazy scheme. It's only a whim. And don't you see, if you get her asked there, and she *doesn't* have a good time, she'll wish she hadn't come after all. And so you'll be giving her a disappointment instead of a pleasure."

"But she would have a good time. I'd see that she did."

"*Yes*, you would! And how? Why, you'd ask the boys to be nice to her, and dance with her and everything. And — would they do it? They would *not! Did* they do it, when you asked them at the High School Dance? They did *not!*"

"How do you know?"

"Lollie told me. He said it was ducky of you to try to be so nice to her, but it wouldn't go down. The boys just simply plain won't,— and you know it."

"Isn't it mean of them, Dot? Don't you think it is?"

"Oh, I don't know. I keep telling you, Dolly, if Bernice was nice to people, you wouldn't have to try to boost her. And if she isn't, boosting won't do any good. There's the whole thing in a nutshell. Now we *must* go home, or they'll be sending over after us."

"Yes, I s'pose we must. Well, Dot, I'll see about this thing. I've got to think it over."

"All right, old slowpoke thinker! And say, Dollops, you aren't mad at what Genie did, are you?"

"Oh, goodness no. You know I don't like practical jokes much; you know how I hated that one they played on Miss Partland, but I'm not mad at Genie, of course not."

"Good for you. But I'll see that she isn't allowed to do such a thing again."

CHAPTER IX

FAIRIES AND SUCH

Dolly did think over the question of Bernice Forbes and the party. And the result of her cogitation led her straight to Grace's house.

"I've come," she said, "to ask a favour, Grace. I want to know if you won't ask Bernice Forbes to your Hallowe'en party."

"Why, Dolly, I would,— only,— well, you see the number is all made up."

"What number?"

"The number I planned to invite. Twelve, it is."

"But couldn't you add two more? Bernice, and another boy to make it even?"

"I suppose I could, but,— you know, Dolly, nobody likes Bernice. She's —"

"Oh, don't tell me what she is! I know it! But, Grace, I think it's mean, the way we girls treat her. Now, never mind *what* she is, won't you ask her, just for my sake?"

Dolly's smile was very winning and her blue eyes

very pleading and Grace was about to consent, when Ethel came in. They told her the subject under discussion.

"Not much!" declared Ethel. "If that thing goes, *I* don't!"

"All right," Dolly blazed back, "if she *doesn't* go, *I* don't!"

Probably neither girl meant what she said, but having said it, they both stuck to it. So spirited the argument became, that Mrs. Rawlins overheard the angry voices and came into the room.

"What *is* the matter, girlies? Why, Dolly Fayre, what are you crying about?"

"I'm not crying, Mrs. Rawlins," and Dolly brushed a tear or two off her cheeks, "b-but I'm afraid,—maybe I m-might. I guess I'll go home now."

"Not till you tell me the trouble, dear," and Mrs. Rawlins sat down beside the disturbed guest. "What is it, Grace?"

"It's my fault, Mrs. Rawlins," Dolly spoke up. "I was trying to make the girls do something they don't want to. And I had no business to do it." Dolly was always just, even against herself.

"But what is it? Tell me, Ethel."

"Why, Mother, Dolly wants to ask Bernice Forbes

to our party, and we don't want to, 'cause she'd spoil the whole thing."

"Why?" and Mrs. Rawlins smiled. "Is Bernice such a spoilsport as all that?"

"Yes, she is."

"Do you think so, Dolly?"

"Well, you see, Mrs. Rawlins, she *isn't* awfully nice, but I'm sorry for her; and I thought if we invited her to things, and made her like us, she'd be nicer, and we'd like her."

"Is this the only reason, Dolly?" and Mrs. Rawlins looked quizzically at her.

Immediately it came into Dolly's mind how Dotty had said everybody would attribute Dolly's interest in Bernice to the fact that she was the daughter of the richest man in town, and really an heiress in her own right. Dolly blushed uncomfortably, but she looked straight at her questioner, and replied, "Yes, Mrs. Rawlins, it's only because I'm sorry for Bernice, and," she hesitated, and then added, honestly, "and a *little*, because everybody is so down on her, and I don't think it's fair!"

"I don't either!" declared the lady, heartily; "you're just right, Dolly. And Bernice shall be invited."

"But Ethel says she won't go, then," began Grace, as Ethel herself spoke up, "Oh, of course I will, if mother says we must ask Bernice. I don't care such a terrible lot, anyway, and I'm sorry I was snappy to you, Dolly."

"I'm sorry I was snappy, too," and Dolly's pretty face showed real contrition. "Are you sure you won't mind too much, girls?"

"Of course they won't," Mrs. Rawlins answered for them. She was a pretty, smiling little lady, and as a rule everybody who was with her liked to do as she said. "Now that is settled, Bernice shall be asked. Mustn't we then ask one more boy?"

"Yes, Mother, and let's ask Clayton to get some one. He knows a lot of boys, and he'll know just which one to ask."

"Good idea, Gracie. Is your dress ready, Dolly? What are you going to wear?"

"Oh, I can't tell you that before the girls! You know it's a masquerade."

"Oh, yes, so it is. Well, set your mind at rest, dear. I'll ask Bernice myself, and I'll tell her about the masquerade. Don't let any one know she's coming, and then they'll never suspect who she is, until you take off your masks."

"Oh, what a lovely idea, Mrs. Rawlins," and Dolly's eyes shone with pleasure. "Don't tell, will you, girls?"

"No," said Grace, "but everybody will know, when they see seven girls, who the other is."

"They won't know for sure, and anyway, the boys won't know. You needn't even tell Clayton."

So the matter was settled, and Dolly went off home happy at having gained her point.

At last the night of the party arrived. The girls had planned not to let each other know what they would wear, and see if they could guess identities. Dolly and Dotty had no idea of each other's costume, and even Grace and Ethel Rawlins were in equal ignorance of theirs.

The girls were to meet at the Rawlins house and the boys at the Browns' and go out to Uncle Jim's separately, in motor cars provided by the several families.

Mrs. Rawlins would act as hostess, and Mr. Rawlins was a general manager, who seemed to look after everything at once.

At the hour of meeting, Dolly found herself to be the first one to arrive. She had come from home by a roundabout way, and her father, who accompanied her to the corner, stepped aside and let her

go up the steps alone, so that no one might suspect it was she. Dolly was attired as a Ghost. Her dress was lovely, being made of many layers of white tarlatan, one over the other, with long angel sleeves, and fluttering draperies, that wafted about as she walked.

A scarf of the same material enveloped her head and neck, and trailed its long ends behind her. She wore white silk gloves, but her hands were hidden in the swirl of the misty material. She was a veritable ghost, and deep in the shadows of her swathing headgear, her face was concealed by a little white satin mask. Of course her hair was completely hidden, and she moved with slow, sinuous movements, waving her draped arms in true spectre fashion.

"Come in, Ghost," said Mrs. Rawlins, as Dolly stepped into the reception room. "Well, you are a spirit, indeed! I never saw a real live ghost before!"

Dolly swept long, ghostly curtseys, but said no word.

Grace Rawlins came next. She had gone out and around several blocks so that she might enter her own house as a visitor. Grace was a Fairy. Her dress was full and frilly, of pale pink crêpe paper, and she had pink and gilt wings, and a long wand. Her hair, which might have been recog-

nisable, was hidden in a dainty pink silk cap, with a long gilt feather, and a full ruche of frilled paper hid her neck and chin. A pink mask covered her face, and she wore long pink silk gloves.

Dolly stared hard at her, but could not be sure who it was. She thought the Fairy looked a little like Maisie May, but never suspected Grace.

Maisie came next, though nobody knew it. She was a Brownie. She had borrowed a suit from a cousin out of town. The costume had been made for a city party and was an exact Brownie rig. Of course it completely disguised Maisie, and the goggle-eyed mask was weird and quite appropriate to the occasion.

Then Bernice came. She represented an Elf. Her costume was made entirely of overlapping green leaves, and a head-dress of the same. Green stockings and slippers, green gloves and a green mask made her entirely unrecognisable. Dolly thought it was Dotty, as the two were much the same height. Bernice moved about shyly, and sank into the first chair she came to, and then Dolly felt sure it was Dotty, trying to disguise her own brisk manner.

When Dotty did come, Dolly had no idea who it was. Her costume was that of a witch. Long red cloak and high peaked cap, from which hung strag-

gling grey locks. A red and black gown, red stockings and black slippers, and a mask like that of a little old lady with a hooked nose and apple-cheeks. She carried a broom, gilded and tied with red ribbons. It was a most picturesque garb, and Dolly decided it must be Bernice.

But no one spoke to another. Occasionally one would nod knowingly, as if to say she recognised some one, or point a finger at her. But the other always shook her head vigorously, as if the guess were wrong.

It was imperative that each should represent some idea connected with the occasion, so Celia Ferris came as Autumn. She wore yellow and brown with touches of red, and she carried a basket of fruit. Her head-dress was made of Autumn leaves, and she wore long necklaces of cranberries strung on a thread.

Last to arrive was Ethel Rawlins. She had delayed late, thinking that then no one would suspect her identity.

She was The Nut Brown Maid. All her robe was of brown, and it had fringes of nuts at the ends of bits of ribbon. Her head-dress was trimmed with chestnut burs, and she had necklace and armlets of strung nuts.

Now the girls were all present, and though they guessed, none knew positively who any other was. Those who knew Bernice's invitation had not told, and those who did not know it, wondered greatly who the seventh girl could be, though some surmised correctly.

Mrs. Rawlins laughingly collected her weird-looking charges and packed them into two big motor cars, and they set off for Uncle Jim's,— for, at his request, all the girls called him by that familiar title, — and as the cars were swift ones, the party soon reached the country house.

Not a word was spoken on the way, for the girls found they were well disguised, and they determined to keep up the mystery. But there was much giggling and many expressive exclamations in deep guttural tones.

Reaching their destination, a wonderful scene awaited them. Uncle Jim had begged Mrs. Rawlins to do anything she could to make the house attractive and appropriate for the occasion. So, with the help of the willing servants, she had transformed the great hall and the big, old parlour into a veritable Hallowe'en Revel. Branches of bright Autumn leaves decked the walls. Red and yellow cheesecloth made gay draperies, and streamers of red

and yellow crêpe paper fluttered here and there. Hollowed-out pumpkins held masses of little late chrysanthemums, and sheaves of grain stood in corners.

There were jack-o'-lanterns, too, made of yellow or of green pumpkins, and also of crook-neck squashes, whose candles within lit up their strange grotesque faces.

The boys had already arrived, and round the room stood seven silent figures. They were dressed as Robin Hood, Peter Pan, or merely as spooks and goblins. Apparently the boys had been quite willing to "dress up," and their costumes were as picturesque as the girls'.

Uncle Jim greeted the incoming crowd.

"Wal, wal, what a visitation! My, but ye're a lot of perty spooks! Look at this white ghost now!" as Dolly swept him a long, low bow. "Ain't she the beauty? I ain't afeard of ghostes like that, now, you bet I ain't! And see the Fairy! My stars! Ye're all so fine, I dunno which way to look first!"

Then the boys advanced and greeted the girls with bows, peering closely for some identifying sign, and getting laughed at for their pains.

"Now, here's yer welcome," said Uncle Jim. "This is a writ welcome, fer the reason that I ain't

much on expressin' my thoughts. But I'm right down glad to see ye all!"

Then each received a pretty printed card, decorated with designs of black cats and owls and witches on broomsticks. It read:

Spooks and Spirits we invite
To our party Witches' night.
And the black cat yowls,
And howls and growls!
And the gray owl hoots,
And To-whits, To-whoots!
And the moon is yellow and big and round
As the pumpkins lying on the ground.
So join our ranks, and come along
To Uncle Jim's where the witches throng!

This was read with nods of delight and the cards laid away to take home as souvenirs.

Robin Hood stood near Dolly as she finished reading hers, and he politely offered her a pencil to write her name on it for safe-keeping. Then he eagerly leaned over to see what name she wrote.

"O-o-o-o-h!" groaned Dolly in sepulchral tones, and then she wrote *Ghost* on her card. But she printed it in straggling letters, for she was too canny to show her own penmanship.

Many were the traps laid to learn who was who, but the secrets were, for the most part, well kept.

Lollie Henry was discovered by his familiar laugh and his inability to suppress it.

Maisie May was known, when a lock of her auburn hair escaped from the queer Brownie head-covering. Then, of course, these two being known, they tried to make the others speak.

"Tell me who you are," Lollie wheedled of the Elf, Bernice. The only answer was a vigorous shake of the green-leaved head.

"Ah, you needn't tell, I know!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "You're Dotty Rose! I know by the toss of your head. Aren't you, now?"

The Elf nodded Yes with such insistence, that Lollie felt sure his guess was wrong.

Dotty as a witch, was in her element. She darted about, tweaking people's ears, or tapping their arms with her broomstick. She had a funny little cackling laugh, that was so unlike her own voice, it was not recognised, though Dolly soon suspected her.

She hovered about Uncle Jim, teasing him until the old man shook with laughter. "My! what a witch it is!" he exclaimed. "Right from old Salem Town, I'll be bound!"

They played all the regulation Hallowe'en games. "Thread the Needle," "Blow the Candle," and all the well-known ones.

Then Mrs. Rawlins brought in a plate, which she set on the table. "This," said she, "is a test to see who of you will be married this year. Now, who will try first?"

The girls hung back, and the boys urged them forward. At last, the Fairy flitted up to make the first test.

On the plate was a mound of flour, tightly pressed into shape. Mrs. Rawlins explained the test. "You see," she said, "the rule is, to fill a bowl with flour, and drop a ring into it. Then press the flour down so tightly, that it will keep its shape when turned out on a plate. Each of you must cut out a slice, and any one who finds the ring will be married this year."

"Sure?" asked Lollie Henry, laughing.

"Yes, sure," asserted Mrs. Rawlins, gravely. "Come, Fairy, after I read the charm, cut your slice. Cut it like a pie, and wherever you choose."

Then Mrs. Rawlins read the charm:

"Little ring within the flour,
Waiting for this witching hour,
Tell me where it is you hide —
On *this* side or on *this* side.
Now, with care the knife I bring —
Do I get you, Little ring?
Now I cut! Just at this spot!
Do I get you, Ring — or *not?*"

The Fairy cut the slice, and all crowded round to learn the result.

"You do *not!*" exclaimed Lollie, as there was no ring seen in the Fairy's slice.

One after another, they each cut a slice, and even to the very last one, no one secured the ring.

"Not strange," said Mrs. Rawlins, calmly, as she took away the plate, "there wasn't any ring in it! Of course none of you children will be married this year or for many years yet."

Then a great laugh went up at the way they had been hoaxed, and Lollie said, comically, "Just my luck! I thought I might get a rich wife, who would promise to wait for me till I'm of age!"

CHAPTER X

FORTUNES FOR ALL

It would seem that it would be easy to discover who the spooks were, but the secrets were well kept. And though several suspected that Bernice Forbes was present, not one connected her with the green-robed Elf. And somehow, the Elf was exceedingly popular. She had merry little ways, and was among the foremost ones in any game or trick. She was often chosen as a partner in the Hallowe'en jokes, and when at last it was supper time, when they would all unmask, the Elf was watched with as much if not more interest than the others. The boys chose partners for the march out to the dining-room.

"I'll take you," said Lollie Henry, linking his arm in that of the Elf. "I think you're Dot Rose, and yet, I think that red witch is Dotty, too. But I mostly think you are, so come along."

The Elf shook her head, hard.

"Does that mean you won't go with me?"

Another negative shake.

"Oh, it means you're not Dotty Rose."

An affirmative nod to this.

"Well, all right, I'll soon find out who you are. May I, fair Elf, escort you to the Spook Feast?"

Lollie bowed low, and then Bernice accepted his escort and they joined the line of march.

Dolly was with Reggie Stuart, though neither of them knew it, and Dotty was with Tod Brown, in equally blissful ignorance.

They marched to the dining-room, and there awaited them a true Hallowe'en table. Decked with yellow paper and red ribbons, loaded with dainties of all sorts, and crowded with little gnomes, witches, black cats, owls and goblins for souvenirs, it was a welcome sight.

They all took their seats, and at a given signal were bidden to remove their masks.

Mr. Rawlins gave the signal.

"Ready, everybody," he said. "When I count three, off with your face coverings. You've been hidden long enough, and I for one will be glad to see your happy smiles. One, two, three!"

And, already loosened, off came every mask, and the flushed, smiling faces looked eagerly at each other.

Dolly was stunned when her eyes lighted on Bernice, for she had concluded the Elf was really

Dotty, and she thought the red witch was Grace.

But more surprised even than Dolly was Lollie Henry. He caught sight of Bernice's smiling face, and he fairly jumped, as he involuntarily exclaimed, "By Gum!" Then suddenly his good manners came to his rescue, and though disappointed in his partner, he managed to look pleasant, and went on. "This is an unexpected pleasure! I didn't know you were to be here."

"And you wish I wasn't!" Bernice flashed back, for she didn't misunderstand him.

"Not a bit of it! Haven't I been chasing the Elf around all the evening?"

"Because you didn't know it was me." Bernice's voice quivered a little. She had been so happy when people were nice to her, and now she caught sight of many surprised and not altogether pleased glances thrown her way.

"But I didn't know anybody, except red-headed Maisie, when one of her rosy locks came out of her Brownie cap. So how could you expect I'd know you?"

"I didn't expect it, and I'm glad you didn't know me, 'cause then you could be nice to me."

"I can be a whole lot nicer now that I do know you, just you wait and see!"

This speech, and the pleasant smile that accompanied it, were greatly to Lollie's credit, for he didn't like Bernice, but having "got into it," as he expressed it to himself, he was bound to put it through, as he further informed himself, "with a hurrah!"

And so, Lollie laughed and chatted with Bernice as well as with the others near him, and the Elf felt a little better.

But others were not so kind-hearted as Lollie, and, too, they hadn't his responsibility as a supper partner. So, on the whole, few spoke to Bernice, while all laughed and joked with the others.

Dotty was not sitting near Dolly, but once, when she caught her eye she frowned a little. However, in the gay chatter that was general, no one had much chance to think of personal matters.

Uncle Jim, himself, sat at the head of the table, and Mr. and Mrs. Rawlins at the other end of the wide board.

"This is downright fine!" Uncle Jim said. "I'd like to have a party like this about once or twice a week. I declare I would!"

"You'd get tired of us, sir," suggested Tod Brown. "We're not always on such good behaviour."

"Ain't, hey? Well, I calk'late you're always

perty good. Good enough, anyway. Don't want childrun *too* good."

"Small danger of that, Uncle Jim," cried Dolly, laughing. "We're none of us sprouting wings yet!"

"Except Gracie, there!" and Uncle Jim laughed at his Fairy niece.

"Sure enough, I forgot Grace's wings. But she'll moult 'em off to-morrow, and be no more angelic than the rest of us."

"You're all good enough for me. I think you're as fine a lot of little misses and masters as ever I see. I'd like a picture of ye."

"And you're going to have one, Uncle," said Mr. Rawlins, rising from the table.

Soon, with the help of Uncle Jim's man he had put in position a camera, and bidding them pose, he took two or three flash-light pictures, which caused great exclamations and startled shrieks.

"Those things scare me to death, don't they you?" said Bernice to Reggie Stuart, who sat at her other side.

"No," he returned, rather uninterestedly. "I'm sort of used to 'em. I've been taken a lot of times that way."

"Have you?" said Bernice. "How exciting! Where?"

Now as a matter of fact, Reggie's experiences were not so numerous as he implied, and most of the times he had been "taken" were failures. So, he only shrugged his shoulders and said, "Oh, I can't remember. It made so little impression on me."

Bernice felt snubbed, and showed it by looking cross. Reggie saw this, and saying to himself, "old sourface!" he turned back to Dolly, who sat on his other side.

"Good for you, Reg," she said in a low tone.

"What for?"

"For being nice to Bernie Forbes. I saw you talking to her. She isn't so bad, now, is she?"

"Dolly, she's the limit! and if you say B. F. to me again to-night I'll — I'll —"

"You'll what?" and Dolly laughed at the irate youth.

"I'll take you out to Berwick Lake and drown you all up!"

"Goodness sake! How ferocious! Well, be sure to ask her for a couple of dances." Roguish Dolly knew Reg wouldn't do this, but it did no harm, she thought, to suggest it.

Supper over, they returned to the big hall, and sat around the roaring log fire, while the next entertainment took place.

Lollie escorted Bernice dutifully to a chair, and then, feeling his duty done, he left her, and went over to speak to Dotty.

"You wished that on me," he said, accusingly. "I thought she was you!"

"Why, Lollie Henry! I refuse to be mistaken for Bernice Forbes! How dare you?" Dotty's dark eyes flashed and she looked a pretty picture in her mock rage.

"Needn't get huffy," returned Lollie, serenely. "B. F. is some looker, all right. To-night, anyway."

Bernice was a pretty girl, and her green costume was exceedingly becoming, but the last few minutes had not been pleasant ones, for since Lollie's defection, no one had spoken to her, and she looked resentful.

"Oh, I don't know," Dotty returned. "She might be pretty if she didn't look cross enough to bite a nail in two."

"Guess she's made that way, and can't help it," said Lollie, and then they were called to attention.

It was to be Fortune Telling, Mr. Rawlins informed them.

"And," he said, "if you will all seat yourselves round the fire, I will tell each and every one of you

just what will happen in the years to come. Aren't you anxious to know?"

"Indeed we are!" cried several, as they took their places.

Mr. Rawlins sat down at a table where were a great many papers.

"These are Fortunes," he said, indicating some neatly folded sheets. "But it would never do to give them out hit or miss. We must see to it that they get where they belong. And this is the only way it can be done. We will invoke the assistance of the Fire Spirit. You know, Hallowe'en is the birthday of the Fire Spirit or Sun Spirit, or some such thing. My Mythology is a little rusty, but you can ask your teachers in school to-morrow. However, I've invoked for your aid to-night the Fire Spirit, and he will help us get the Fortunes right. Now, will some kind gentleman volunteer to help the Fire Spirit help me?"

Nobody offered, as the boys felt a little shy about it, so Mr. Rawlins called on his son, Clayton.

"You'll do, Son," he said. "You're not as handsome as some of those other chaps, and not as wise as some, but on the whole you're a good sort, so come on, and help your old dad."

Clayton went up and stood by his father's side.

"Now, you see," went on Mr. Rawlins, "all these are Fortunes, and all these are small slips of blank paper. I take a Fortune in my hand. I ask of thee, O Fire Spirit, to tell me for whom it is meant! Clayton, please hold a slip of blank paper to the blazing fire. The Fire Spirit will write upon it."

Clayton picked up the top slip from the pile, and did as he was told. As he held it, writing began to appear.

"Ah," said Mr. Rawlins, as everybody watched a name being written on the paper, by no means that they could see. "Has the Fire Spirit written, Son?"

"Y-Yes, sir," stammered Clayton, a little frightened at what he saw.

"Can you read it?"

"Yes, sir; it says Dotty Rose."

"Ah, this fortune is for Dotty, is it? I will read it:

> "You'll have a career
> More brilliant each year;
> But you'll climb a steep hill
> Ere you get what you will.

Take it, Dotty, and keep it always. It may serve as a guidance to your feet in future years!"

Dotty came and took the paper, a little bewildered. "May I have the name the Spirit wrote?" she asked.

"Yes, oh, yes, indeed. Treasure it carefully. The Fire Spirit does not always respond to mortal's requests."

Dotty returned to her seat, and with the rest sat breathlessly watching while Mr. Rawlins took up another fortune paper, and motioned for Clayton to hold out another blank paper for the Fire Spirit to write on. "You're sure it's blank, are you, Clay?"

"Yes, Father," and the boy looked carefully on both sides. It was pure white. He held it out to the fire and soon it was written on, in a clear bold hand, just like Dotty's.

"It says Grace Rawlins, Father."

"Ah, my Gracie's fortune. I hope it will prove a good one." Mr. Rawlins then unfolded and read the fortune he was holding.

> "As you pass through future years
> Here are smiles and there are tears.
> But the passing days will show
> Far more happiness than woe.

Good for you, Grace, that's a nice fortune."

Grace stepped up and took her fortune and her name paper, and then the next one was tried. This

time the Fire Spirit wrote Lorillard Henry, and the verse ran:

> For a few years, my boy, you may want for the pelf,
> But later in life you will earn it yourself.
> And as the years fly, you'll get richer and richer,
> For you're destined to be a professional pitcher.

They all laughed at this, for Lollie's love of baseball was well known.

"Another blank, Clayton, and hold it closer to the Fire Spirit. He is old and he can't see very well."

"But I don't want to burn my fingers, Dad."

"True that would be a pity. And you're already red-faced from the blaze. Well, try the tongs. It may be more comfortable."

So Clayton took a slip of blank paper, and fastened it securely in the tongs' grip and held it out to the Fire Spirit in the flames. He began to write at once, and in a moment the name Bernice Forbes stood out clearly.

Mr. Rawlins read the paper he was holding:

> "Fate holds joy in store for you,
> Loving friendships warm and true.
> As through life your way you wend,
> Happiness will crown the end.

A very pretty fortune, Bernice, dear,— may it come true." Mr. Rawlins spoke so kindly, that Bernice's

pale face glowed with pleasure as she took her two papers.

"Let me hold *my* name, mayn't I?" asked Maisie May.

"I don't know when your name will come," returned Mr. Rawlins. "It's as the Fire Spirit decrees."

"Well, let me hold the next name, anyway. I want to see how that Spirit holds his pen!"

"Surely," said Mr. Rawlins. "Always glad to oblige. Let her take your place, Son."

Clayton gave the tongs to Maisie. With careful scrutiny, she looked over the blank bit of paper before she clutched it tightly in the tongs.

"Don't let it drop into the fire," cautioned Mr. Rawlins, "or somebody will be without a fortune."

"No, sir," said Maisie, watching the paper carefully. And sure enough, as she held it, the name was slowly written thereon.

"It's Todhunter Brown," she announced.

"All right," said Mr. Rawlins, "here goes:

"You will fly
Fine and high,
In an airship through the sky!
Looking down
With a frown
On your friends in Berwick Town."

"Hullo, Tod," said Lollie, "so you'll get your airship, then! Won't that be fine! Give me a ride?"

"Yes, indeedy. I'm glad old Fire Spirit knows how much I want an airship, and maybe he'll give me one."

"Well, fortune will, and it's all the same."

"Let me hold a paper once," asked Dolly. "I want to see how it is done, really."

"Now, Dolly Fayre, don't you seem to doubt the Fire Spirit, or he may run away home and not tell any more fortunes."

"Oh, I won't hurt him. I just want to try it once. Come on, Dot, let's try it together."

"No, I don't want to," and as Dolly looked at her in surprise, she added, "the fire burns my face so."

"Pooh, never knew you to be afraid of your complexion before."

"Well, I don't want to, anyhow. Let Bernice help you, if you need help."

Oho, so that was it! Dolly thought to herself. Dotty was mad at Bernice's presence at the party, and took this means of showing it!

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRE SPIRIT

DOLLY glanced round to see if any one else had noticed Dolly's speech. Apparently, no one had.

So, deeming it best to ignore it, Dolly said, "Come on, Bernice," and laughingly drew the half-unwilling Elf along with her.

"Here you are!" said Mr. Rawlins, gaily. "One nice clean blank paper for each of you. Who'll go first? You, Dolly?"

"No; Bernice, you try it."

So taking the paper carefully in the tongs, Bernice held it to the blaze of the logs.

"Spirit of the Fire," said Mr. Rawlins, in a dramatic voice, "tell us, pray, whose is this Fortune I have here, folded in my hand."

And then appeared on the paper, the name of Maisie May.

"Ah, our Maisie," and Mr. Rawlins read:

> "Ere you are so very old,
> You will marry wealth untold.
> Now your Knight is far away,
> But he'll come to you some day.

Congratulations, Maisie, dear. May you be very happy, in your future life, rolling in gold and living in palaces."

"I can't feel positively sure it will come true," laughed Maisie; "is it guaranteed?"

"Wait till 'Some day' and see," returned Mr. Rawlins. "Now, Dolly."

Dolly was most anxious to know how the writing appeared on the papers. She didn't for a moment believe in the Fire Spirit, but she was curious to know the trick, She scrutinised her paper, but saw only blank whiteness. Then she carefully put it in the tongs, and held it to the fire. Sure enough, there came the writing at once, and it said, Clayton Rawlins.

"This is interesting," exclaimed Clayton's father. "I'm glad to know the future of my children. Listen, Clay:

> "In years to come, in some far distant land,
> You'll run a fine and prosperous peanut stand!

Well, my boy, as you are assured of earning an honest living, I've no fault to find, have you?"

"No," returned Clayton; "I love peanuts!"

Dolly gave it up. She couldn't see how the trick was accomplished. Mr. Rawlins let her try again,

and this time she read the name of Dolly Fayre, herself.

"Read me my fortune," she cried. "What is my fate?"

> "You will visit distant scenes,
> You will meet with Kings and Queens.
> But the one who'll be your mate
> Lives already in this State."

Mr. Rawlins handed her the fortune paper, saying, "You are to be envied indeed! Meeting with royalty! Oh, my!"

"Oh, my! I should say so! Well, I'll like it all right. I love adventure, and this sounds fine. Only I wish I knew when the king and queen visits would begin."

"That's the worst of fortunes," observed Mrs. Rawlins; "they leave so much to the imagination."

Then others wanted to try holding the papers. But none could guess how a blank paper could be written on by the fire, whether a spirit did it or not.

"Great, isn't it?" cried Tad Brown, as he watched the writing appear. "Joe Collins! Hullo, Joe, what you s'pose your fortune will be? Something desperate, 'll bet. Joe's a terror, you know!"

"We'll see;" and Mr. Rawlins read:

> "Your wit is keen, your humour fine,
> To you they'll prove a real gold mine!

For you will move from Berwick Town,
And be a famous Circus Clown!

Good, Joe! I'd go to the circus twice a day to see you perform."

"I can do it!" and Joe capered around with the antics of a clown. "Here you are, ladies and gentlemen! The funniest living clown in captivity! Come one, come all! Pink lemonade free. Get your peanuts from Old Clay Rawlins! Hip! Hip! Hooray!"

When Joe stopped prancing about and the others stopped laughing at him, Mr. Rawlins read next "Tadema Brown."

"Hardly know myself by my Sunday name," and Tad listened for his fate.

"You care but naught for this world's goods,
You love the fields and flowers and woods;
To you the note of singing birds
Is sweeter far than human words."

"Well, that's true, anyway," said Tad, heartily. He was a born naturalist, and often spent his Saturdays wandering alone through the woods and fields, looking for new wild flowers or birds' eggs to add to his collections.

"Poky old fortune, I call it," declared Dotty. "Whose is next?"

"Ethel's!" said her father. "Well, my child, here you are:

"You shall travel many a land
Seeing wonders great and grand.
But for home your heart will yearn,
Back to Berwick you'll return!"

"Indeed I will," said Ethel; "I'm the homesickest thing ever, if I'm away from mother."

"Ned Hillman," announced Dolly, who was holding the tongs again. "Read it, Mr. Rawlins."

"Your Fate has not tarried,
Your Future is bright;
And you will be married
Two years from to-night!

Well, well, Ned, so your bachelor days are numbered. Make the most of your freedom before you settle down to housekeeping."

"All right, Mr. Rawlins," said Ned. "But I'll have to hustle to get a house to keep, in two years! Couldn't old Fire Spirit give me a little more time?"

"He might extend it, in case of good behaviour. What, Celia Ferris is next? Here you are, Celia:

"Though you are a pretty creature,
You are doomed to be a Teacher,
For a year or two. And then,
You will wed the best of men.

H'm, seems to me Ned and Celia will step off at about the same time!"

This caused great hilarity, for Ned's admiration for the pretty Celia was not altogether a secret. Celia blushed, but did not look at all offended.

"Huh!" said Joe Collins, "no fun teasing those two! They like it!"

"I *don't!*" cried Celia, blushing, and then they all laughed harder.

"And beside," went on Joe, "it said Celia would wed the best of men. Now, though we all love our Neddie, we can't pedestal him as the *best* of men, can we? Or, can we?"

"We can! we can!" they all shouted in rollicking chorus.

"And now for the last fortune; may it prove the best," said Mr. Rawlins, holding up the last paper.

"Must be mine," said Reggie Stuart. "I haven't had any yet."

It was his, and it said:

> You never will have wealth,
> You'll keep no powdered flunkey;
> But you'll travel, for your health,
> With a hand-organ and monkey!

"Fine!" and Reggie laughed with the rest of them. "I'm awfully fond of music, and I couldn't

have chosen a better fortune myself. Think of wandering about in the Spring —"

"With a monkey on a string!" chimed in Joe.

"Flowers a-bloom and birds a-wing," from Tad.

"Catching coin like anything!" wound up Reggie. "Oh, it's a great life! I always envied the hand-organ man."

The fortunes over, Dolly begged Mr. Rawlins to tell how the Fire Spirit was induced to write on the blank papers.

"I have a contract with the Spirit," he declared, "and if I order him, he will write for me. No one else can command him."

"Oh, now, I dunno 'bout that," drawled Uncle Jim, who had been an eager-eyed spectator of the fortune telling, though he had said little. "S'pose, now, Dolly, you hold up this here piece of blank paper an' see if the Sperrit won't write on it."

Dolly took the sheet of paper offered her, and put it in the tongs. Slowly some writing appeared. It said: "Mr. Rawlins is fooling you. Make him tell. (signed, The Fire Spirit.)"

"I thought so," cried Dolly, and going to him, she said, coaxingly: "Now, Mr. Rawlins, you must tell us. The Fire Spirit commands you."

"Then I shall have to, of course," and Mr. Raw-

lins laughed good-naturedly. "Well, since you will have the veil torn from the mystery, I'll own up. The way to produce that writing is simply to write it on the papers beforehand, with milk —"

"With milk!"

"Yes, use a small paint brush dipped in milk. Write your message, let it dry, and then when it is held to the fire the heat turns the milk brown and the writing appears. But, when I let Uncle Jim into my secret, I didn't know he would turn it against myself."

"You would have told us, anyway," and Dolly nodded her head at him. "But it's a good trick. Does it always work?"

"Yes, if you do it properly. It's well to go over the milk letters a second time, while they are wet enough to see. Then the heat scorches them better. Also, have a care not to let the papers be handled or blurred before using."

"Thank you, that's a fine thing to know," and Dolly tucked it away in her noddle for future use. She already saw herself mystifying Bert and Bob when they came home.

"Great, isn't it, Dot?" she cried, her first thought, as always, to share every idea with Dotty.

But again, Dotty gave her the cold shoulder. She

heard, but, pretending not to, she turned to Celia and chattered quickly.

Dolly gave her a hurt look, and then, as Dotty glanced at her without a responding smile, Dolly went deliberately across the room to where Bernice stood, alone and neglected.

Dolly was in defiant mood. She was full of wrath at Dotty's attitude, and she was angry, too, at the boys, because they would not be nice to Bernice.

"Hello, Bernie," she said. "How'd you like your fortune?"

"I don't like anything," returned Bernice, her eyes stormy with discontent. "I want to go home."

"We're all going," said Dolly, "after one dance. Uncle Jim wants to see us do a Virginia Reel, and Mrs. Rawlins is going to play for us. Come on."

"Nobody will ask me to dance. I want to go home."

Just then, Tad came up to Dolly and asked her to dance with him.

"Not unless you find a partner for Bernice," said Dolly. She spoke in a low tone, and they turned away, so Bernice did not hear. But she imagined what they were saying, and it did not tend to make her happier.

"Can't do it," said Tad, positively. "Nobody

will dance with that lemon! Why, look at her, Doll! She's a human thunder-cloud. Who'd dance with that?"

"Then I'll dance with her, myself. I'd rather do that, than have her left out."

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Leave her alone, and let's get our places. You can't scare me, saying you'll dance with her! No, sir, not little Dolly Fayre. She's going to trip it with yours truly, and that's all there is about that!"

Then Dolly had an inspiration. "Wait a minute," she said to Tad, and she ran over to where Uncle Jim was smiling at his guests.

"Aren't you going to dance, Uncle Jim?" she said.

"Well, now, I hadn't thought on 't. But it's right down nice of you to ask me. I'd like to,— by gum, I'd like to! But which of all these perty young misses would dance with me? I ask you that?"

"Why, any of them would be proud to dance with the host. I would myself, only I'm engaged for it. But how do you like the Elf?"

"That perty one in green? I'd like her mighty well, if she'd honor me."

"Let's go and ask her," and Dolly led the old man across to Bernice. "Say, Bernie, you're the belle of

the ball! Uncle Jim wants you to dance the Reel with him."

"That I do, if you would give me the honor," and Uncle Jim made an old-fashioned bow, of deference and respect. He had the grace of an old-time beau, and it appealed to Bernice's pride to be chosen by the host of the evening.

"Thank you," she said, a little shyly, and took the arm of the old man, as they found places in the line.

Dolly was beaming at her success. "It's all right, no thanks to you," she said to Tad, as she returned to him.

"You're a hummer, Dolly, and no mistake! That was a first-rate scheme. You couldn't have made any of the boys take her."

"I know it," and Dolly sighed. Then she changed the subject, for she had no wish to discuss Bernice further just then.

As it turned out, Uncle Jim was a fine dancer, and he cut pigeon wings and made old-fashioned bows, with his hand on his heart. Bernice, also a good dancer, entered into the spirit of the quaint dance, and they were by far the most effective couple on the floor.

As a grand finale, Uncle Jim balanced up and

down the line with Bernice in gay whirls, and then fairly swung her off her feet, in a wild pirouette.

"Good!" cried Mr. Rawlins, clapping his hands. "Didn't know you were such a gay young buck, Uncle Jim! You'll have to come to dancing class and teach the youngsters the real thing!"

Flushed and smiling, Bernice said good-night to her host and partner, and ran away to the cloak-room.

"You were splendid, Bernie," said Dolly, as she put on her wrap. "Wasn't she, Dot?"

"Yes," said Dotty, coldly. "But I don't care for such boisterous dancing myself."

"Oh, you don't!" said Dolly, mad clear through. "Well, keep your preferences and opinions to yourself!" She turned her back on Dotty, and adjusted her scarf before the mirror. Her pink cheeks were scarlet, and her blue eyes flashed with indignation. It was the injustice of Dotty's attitude that hurt her. She had only tried to give Bernice a good time, and she couldn't see why that should make Dot so horribly snippy.

Then she heard exclamations and shouts out in the hall, and hurried out to see what it meant.

At first she thought the house was on fire. A red glow showed through the windows and from the open

door. Then she discovered that it was a glow of red fire in honour of the occasion. Uncle Jim had arranged it to give them a gay and pleasant send-off. There were fires burning in all directions, and the effect was a general red glow as bright as day.

"How beautiful!" cried everybody, for the scene was like fairyland. And then they all thanked Uncle Jim over and over for the party, and for his kindness and thoughtfulness, and the motors came, and the young people were packed in and sent rolling homeward.

Dolly was a little silent, for she was deeply hurt at Dotty's manner, and had to think things over before she decided what to do about it all.

Dotty, on the other hand, was unusually gay. She proposed singing songs, and herself started the tunes. She laughed and chattered with everybody else, but said no word to Dolly.

When they reached their respective homes, the girls went into their houses without a parting word of good-night to each other.

CHAPTER XII

MAD AND MEASLES

The next day was Saturday, and the Two D's had planned to spend the morning at Treasure House, studying first, and afterward arranging for a luncheon they were going to have there the next Saturday.

They intended to ask four girls and have a lovely party, but now the very thought of it brought the tears to Dolly's eyes. She was in her room, wondering whether to go over to Treasure House or to wait for some word from Dotty. They had never had a real quarrel before and Dolly didn't know quite how to manage it. So she watched from her window to see if Dot would go over. And Dotty did. Soon Dolly saw her walking along the path, her head up, singing a little song, and then she unlocked the door of Treasure House and went in.

So Dolly followed, and went in to find that Dotty had started a good fire, and was sitting at her desk, studying.

Dolly looked at Dotty and Dotty looked at Dolly, but neither spoke. Dolly thought Dotty looked spite-

ful and Dotty thought Dolly looked stubborn. And they both did look so, and they felt so.

Dolly threw off her coat, laid another log on the blazing fire, and sat down at her desk to study.

Silence reigned and reigned with such absolute monarchy that each girl felt as if she should scream. Perhaps you know the tension of such a situation. Both sat still, until arms and legs felt rigid, faces were strained, and hearts beat as if they would burst. Yet, neither felt she could speak. That would be a humiliating admission of being in the wrong, which neither was willing to make.

Turned slightly away from each other, they were not mutually visible, yet each felt that the other knew every move she made.

Dolly was almost ready to cry, her neck felt so stiff and her arm so cramped. She moved a trifle, and the sensation was as if she had made a disturbance in church. She at once became motionless again, her burning face showing her embarrassed self-consciousness.

Dotty of sterner stuff sat stiffly still, now and then turning a page of her book with utmost deliberation. Then her foot went to sleep, and she wanted to get up and dance on it. Of course, there was no reason why she shouldn't dance on it to her

heart's content, but if you are acquainted with the peculiar etiquette of "getting mad," you know she would have endured torture before she would have done anything that could have been construed as sociable.

So the two silly things sat there, each trying to study, pretending to study, and really wondering what the other was thinking.

At last the burned out fire required mending. With a furtive glance at Dotty, Dolly got up, sauntered to the wood-box, selected a log with care, and laid it carefully on the embers of the expiring ones glowing among the ashes.

Dotty jumped up, glad of a chance to step on her sleeping foot, and seizing the poker, jammed Dolly's log into place so fiercely that it fell down between the andirons.

"I'll 'tend to the fire," said Dolly, coldly, for a speech of this sort was entirely permissible.

"You think you know all about fire-making, don't you? Well, that big log will never burn without a stick of kindling-wood."

"It would, if you'd let it alone. You always poke a fire till you put it out!"

"I don't either! I had the fire all right, till you came over and bothered with it."

"Well, then, fix it yourself, smarty, if you know so much!"

Dolly flounced back to her chair and sat down. Usually gentle, and even-tempered, when Dolly did get stirred up, she was so miserable, all through, that she couldn't control herself. And now, she knew that if she staid there with Dotty, in those strained relations, she would very shortly burst into uncontrollable tears.

Dotty slammed another log on top of the first one, took the hearth brush and flirted the ashes about a little, took the tongs, and fussed about with those, and then, adjusting the fender with meticulous care, went back to her seat, and again silence took up its sceptre.

The very light-ticking clock could be plainly heard, indeed it sounded as loud as the click of a typewriter in the gloomy atmosphere. The girls turned farther away from each other until they were fairly back to back.

Dolly was all the time growing more and more inclined to tears; not tears of sorrow, so much as of indignation, of weariness and of general nerve strain.

Dotty, tearless, with no inclination to cry, became more and more ruffled with anger at Dolly, and a vague half-recognised jealousy of Bernice; as well

as a sort of remorse at her own unkindness to her chum.

But what could be done? Girls who are "mad at" each other can not violate the age-old canons of not speaking, and to speak first was the deepest humiliation.

So the two little ninnies sat there. Dotty's feet went to sleep, one after the other. Dolly's arms stiffened and relaxed in turn. The minutes dragged by like hours. Lessons were not learned, for how can one put one's mind on the Ptolemies or their successors, when one is mad at one's friend?

At last, somehow, the motionless hour-hand of the hammering clock managed to worm its way to twelve, a permissible, if not usual, hour to go home.

Simultaneously, and with the same air of preoccupied intentness, both girls put away books and papers, and pulled on her coat sleeves.

Dolly dawdled over her desk a moment, hoping Dotty would speak. Dotty looked at the back of Dolly's head, decided it still looked stubborn, and turned away.

Together, yet miles apart, they went out of the door. Dotty locked it with her key, she was always the quicker one at that, and then, with an assumed lightness of step, the two silly young things ran

across their respective lawns and into their respective homes.

Merry and bright they were at their respective luncheon tables, for the unwritten law required that their parents must not know of the tragedy that had befallen.

So, when Mrs. Fayre informed Dolly that her company was desired for a ride that afternoon, the consent was prompt and willing. And when Mrs. Rose asked Dotty to stay with Genie while she went out on some errands, there was no objection raised.

But there were two sore and sorry hearts in the neighbouring houses, and two brains pondered over the question of what was best to do.

Dolly was unwilling to give up her pet plan of helping Bernice. She couldn't explain entirely to her own satisfaction, just why she was so interested in this project, but she knew she had no unworthy motive. It was not,— of that she was sure,— because Bernie was rich and lived in the grandest house in Berwick. It was not because she wanted her for her own particular friend. But it seemed too bad that a nice girl like that should be out of everything for lack of a guiding hand. And, it must be admitted, Dolly liked to play the part of guiding hand.

Dotty, for her part, was mad because Dolly had gone off and asked the girls to invite Bernice to their party, after she had practically agreed not to. This was Dolly's sole argument. The fact of her own jealousy of Dolly's interest in Bernice she ignored, for the present, at least.

So the two foolish ones spent much of the golden Autumn afternoon ruffling the feathers of their souls, and persistently keeping them ruffled.

That evening, as the Fayres sat at dinner, the telephone rang, and Mrs. Fayre was asked for.

After a time she returned to the table.

"Here's a state of things," she said, smiling, yet looking serious too. "It was Mrs. Rose telephoning. Genie has the measles, or rather, they think she has, and so Mrs. Rose asks if we'll let Dotty come here to stay till they're over."

"Well, well," said Mr. Fayre, "that's too bad for poor little Genie. But I rather think I can guess the names of Two D's who won't be sorry about the projected visit. Eh, Dollykins?"

Dolly was stricken dumb. Dotty coming for a week, maybe more,— how long did measles last, anyway? Was it a month? Could they go without speaking all that time?

"How — how long will she be here, Mother?" at last a small, scared voice said.

"A couple of weeks, I daresay. Why,— aren't you glad? I thought you'd be overjoyed. Not at Genie's illness, but at Dotty's coming."

"Did — did you tell her she could come, Mother?"

"Surely, child. Won't you have the good times, though!"

"She can have the pink guest room," said Trudy, kindly. "That's almost next to Doll's room, and they can chum all they like. Hasn't Dotty been exposed, Mother?"

"Yes, but she has had measles, so she's immune. But she can't go to school if she remains in the house where the illness is. So she's to come here."

"When?" asked Dolly, in a queer, far-away voice.

"Now; right away," replied her mother. "We'll put aside that best lace bed-set, Trudy, and give her a plainer one."

"Of course. I'll fix the room, Mother, you needn't give it a thought."

"You're a great help, Trude," said Mrs. Fayre, smiling at her elder daughter.

Meantime the younger daughter of the house of Fayre was struggling with her emotions. She didn't know whether to be sorry or glad.

And before she had time to decide, Dotty arrived.

"Isn't this great?" she exclaimed in a state of excitement. "It's awful kind of you, Mrs. Fayre, to take me in, but you see, I'd hate so to be out of school just now. It's near examinations, and I do want to pass."

"We'll pass you," said Mr. Fayre. "We'll put you through, with bells on! But I expect you Two D's will chatter and giggle all the time instead of studying."

"Oh, no, we won't," and from the cold smile Dotty flashed at her, Dolly understood the feud was as desperate as ever, but the elders were to be kept in ignorance of it. For a feud suspected by parents is as good as finished. No real feud can exist in the scathing beams of grown people's ridicule.

So Dolly smiled coldly in return, and said, "No, indeed," in a tone that ought not to have deceived a feeble-minded jellyfish.

Nor did it deceive Trudy. "Something's up," she thought, but wisely kept her thoughts to herself.

Later, when the girls went to bed, they parted at their doorways in the hall.

"Good night, Dollyrinda," said Dotty, heartily, in a voice loud enough to be heard down-stairs, if

any one chanced to be listening. "I'm fearfully tired, so I'll go right to bed."

"Good night, Dotsie," returned the other guileful one. "You must be tired, with the worry about Genie, and all. Good night."

The door shut and there was silence as far as the Two D's were concerned.

"What can it be?" thought Trudy, who had heard the high-pitched conversation. But she bided her time to find out.

The next day was a trial. Being Sunday, the whole family was much together. The Two D's were at their wit's end to preserve an apparent friendliness, without showing each other any real diminution of their desperate hatred of one another. Trudy eyed them, when she could do so unobserved, and concluded that they were "mad at" each other. "Silly little geese!" she thought, well remembering her own not so far past schooldays.

She determined to give them every chance.

"Going over to Treasure House?" she inquired, soon after dinner.

"Dunno. Do you want to go, Dot?" said Dolly, with studied carelessness."

"Oh, I don't care, Dolly. Just as you like," and Dotty's politeness was faultless.

"Of course you do," said Mr. Fayre, looking up from his paper. "What did I build that house for if you're not to use it?"

"Shall we go, Dot?"

"Yes, if you like."

Dolly did not like, at all, but Mr. Fayre spoke up again. "Run along over, kiddies, and after a while, I'll saunter over myself. I haven't been there for a week, and I like to keep in touch with it."

"All right, Dad. Come on, Dotty."

The two girls went across the lawn, side by side.

"Wonder how Genie is," said Dolly, with the laudable intention of "making talk."

"She isn't sick, you know," returned Dotty, courteously. "The doctor isn't sure it really is measles. But he'll know in a day or two."

They went into Treasure House. Something about the look of the place got on Dolly's nerves. The lovely house, the dear furniture, the beautiful treasures, and then — the two owners acting like a pair of silly idiots,— it was too much! But, whereas yesterday, she had felt sad and distressed, the long trying hours had made her irritable and angry, and as the door closed behind them, she burst out, "I think you're perfectly *horrid*, Dotty Rose!"

"So do I think *you* are, Dolly Fayre!"

"The *idea* of being mad at me, just because I want to do a deed of kindness for a friend!"

"She *isn't* your friend."

"Why, of course she's my friend —"

"You hardly know her!"

"You don't have to know people such an awful lot to be friends with them,— not if they're nice people."

"Huh! I s'pose I'm not nice people, then. You're not very friendly with me!"

"Neither are you with me!"

"You know why."

"So do you know why."

"I don't know why, and I don't care why. If you want old Bernice Forbes for your friend instead of me, you can have her, I don't care!"

"I don't want her instead of you —"

"You do so! You like her because she's —"

"You stop that, Dotty Rose! Don't you dare say that! I'll like her if I want to,— so there now, and you can think whatever you please! I don't care *what* you think!"

A step on the porch sounded, and the angry combatants, ashamed to be caught quarrelling, ran back to the dining-room.

"Where are you, ladies of the house?" called out

Mr. Fayre, as he and Mrs. Fayre stepped into the study.

"All right, be there in a minute," called Dotty in a cheery voice, as she mopped her heated brow with her handkerchief, and straightened her rumpled collar.

And in a moment, two normally serene girls came in the room to receive their guests.

"What were you talking about as we came up the steps?" asked Mrs. Fayre, in idle curiosity; "you were speaking so loudly and excitedly."

"We were—" began Dolly, and stopped. She was a truthful child, and since she didn't want to state the facts, she preferred to say nothing. Dotty too, began to speak and stopped.

"Never mind, Mother," said Mr. Fayre, laughing, "let the girls have their little secrets."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FEAST THAT FAILED

THAT night the Two D's put off going to bed as long as possible, and when, at last, Mrs. Fayre sent them away, laughingly, they marched up-stairs like two deaf and dumb Drum Majors.

"What's the matter with the kiddies?" asked Mr. Fayre, who couldn't help noticing their demeanour.

"I don't know, I'm sure," returned his wife. But Trudy laughed outright, and said:

"I do. They're mad."

"Mad?"

"Yes. A school girl 'mad,' you know. Neither will speak first — it's beneath her dignity. They'll act like this a day or two longer, and then they'll make up. I know 'em!"

"Better speak to them, Mother," suggested Mr. Fayre, "and clear up matters. Seems silly to me."

"Oh, I don't believe I'd better interfere. They'll fix it up themselves, if that's what's the matter. Some foolish quarrel, I suppose."

"It isn't like them. They rarely quarrel."

Trudy looked thoughtful. "But I'm sure it *is* that. They never spoke to each other at supper, though each was gay and chatty with the rest of us."

"Silly babies!" said Mr. Fayre, smiling. "Let them work it out themselves, then."

Meanwhile the "silly babies" were tossing on restless pillows. In adjoining rooms, Dolly and Dotty were thinking hard, though in different moods. Dotty was tumbling about the bed, throwing her arms out and digging her face in her pillow, in the intensity of her warring emotions.

Dolly was lying quiet and straight, her eyes turned toward the ceiling, her heart throbbing, as she "thought it out."

Both rooms were flooded with moonlight, and the two girls stayed awake far into the night.

At last, about one o'clock, Dolly finished her cogitations. Deliberately, she rose and put on her dressing-gown and slippers. She went to Dotty's room, opened the door softly and walked in. Then she closed the door behind her, and going to the bedside, said:

"You awake, Dots?"

"Yep," came the surprised voice from the rumpled coverlets.

"Well, sit up here, then. I've come to talk."

"Isn't — isn't it late?" and Dotty sat up, a little uncertain what attitude to assume.

"Of course it's late. But I've got to have this thing out. I can't go on this way."

"Nor I either, Doll!" and Dotty leaned forward and threw her arms around Dolly's neck in a convulsive hug that nearly strangled her. "Aren't we the silly geese to —"

"Now, you wait, Dotty Rose. After I say what I've come to say, you may not want —"

"Yes, I will, Dolly! I don't care *what* you're going to say. You may jump on me all you like,— I *was* a pig, but I'm sorry, and —"

"I'm sorry, too! You shan't be sorry before I am!"

"But I have to, Doll! You know I'm always *everything* before you are. I'm quicker-jointed, or something. But never mind that, I've got you back, you dear old thing, and now you can go ahead and scold me, all you want to. Oh, Doll, hasn't it been horrid?"

"*Hasn't* it! Well, as we're all right again, let's have this Bernice business out once and for all. If you say so, Dotty, I'll give up trying to make her more popular. I've thought it all out, and it's this way. You're my best friend, and I want you to be,

and if it bothers you so to have me friendly with her, — why, I won't be, that's all."

"Oh, Dollyrinda, how sweet you are! You make me feel like an awful pig. But you see,— well, I s'pose I was jealous. I thought you'd like Bernice more and more, till you liked her better'n everybody and better'n me. And I just couldn't stand it!"

"Why, Dorothy Rose! The idea of your thinking *that!*" and Dolly clasped the tousled black head to her breast and kissed the tear-wet cheeks. "We're special friends, nobody could come between *us!* They'd just better try it!"

"Then that's all right!" and Dotty's quick-working mentality jumped to a happy conclusion of their troubles. "Now, look here, Doll, you don't have to throw Bernice over entirely."

"I will, if you want me to."

"But I don't want you to. Your idea of making her one of our set is all right, now that I know *we're* all right. And I'll help you."

"Will you? Oh, Dot, then we can do it. We'll have to plan it —"

"Oh, of course! You'd have to plan, if it was only to eat your dinner!" and Dotty affectionately pulled the golden curls. "And say, old Dollypops, we

haven't planned much for our luncheon next Saturday."

"Couldn't very well, when we were mad. Oh, Dot, wasn't it horrid in the house yesterday morning?"

"Horrid all the time. Hasn't to-day been awful?"

"Yep. But it was funny you had to come over here to stay just now."

"Awful funny. Now about Saturday —"

"No, sir! Not *now* about Saturday. Do you know what time it is?"

"Nixy; and I don't care."

"Well, I do. It's 'most two o'clock, and Mother will give us Jesse to-morrow if she hears us talking so long. So you go by-by, and I will too, and we'll plan by daylight. Good night, old girl."

"Good night, Dollums, and I am sorry I was horrid."

"So'm I, that I was."

And peace being declared and ratified, the Two D's went to sleep so successfully that they were late to breakfast.

"The country's safe," remarked Trudy, after the pair had started for school.

"How do you know?" asked her mother.

"Signs. Lots of 'em. They talked *to* each other, not *at* each other. And they smiled and sang, and were generally in fine spirits."

"Well, I'm glad of it. I hate to have them so childish and silly."

"I 'spect all girls are. They'll outgrow it. And they are two such sensible, nice, little girl chums, that I don't believe it will happen often."

Nor did it. In all their lives, Dotty and Dolly never again had one of those foolish "mads" that most school girls know so well.

They had differences of opinion frequently, very frequently; and often they had hot, hasty words; but the quarrels were of short duration, and ended amicably and lovingly.

The Saturday luncheon was duly planned. They invited Maisie, the two Rawlins girls and Celia. Dolly would have liked to ask Bernice and Dotty was more than willing, but they had only room for six,—and too, they knew all the girls would like it better without the stranger, and so for this time they decided against her, agreeing that they would invite her some time soon.

It was to be a very festal occasion. More, the whole luncheon was to be the work of the two girls themselves. Not everything was to be made in

Treasure House, but no one save the Two D's could have a hand in the preparations.

And so, when Saturday morning came, they were up bright and early to begin their work. Dotty was still at the Fayres'; Genie, though better was still housed, and the time was not yet up when Dotty could return home.

"It doesn't seem fair, Doll," said Dotty as, swathed in big aprons, they went into the Fayre kitchen, "for me to work over here. We've always divided the work before."

"That doesn't matter. What do you want for the cake?"

"A big bowl and a spoon. I'll measure out the things myself."

"All right, and I'll make the salad dressing now."

Two busy bees worked all the morning, barely having time to set the table in Treasure House and arrange some flowers there before their guests came.

"Goodness, there they are!" cried Dotty, as she set a saucepan of lard on their kitchenette stove to heat. "I can't leave this, Doll, so you go in and do the polite, and I'll run in when I can. They won't mind."

So Dolly, serene and smiling, met the girls, who all came together.

"What a jolly lark!" exclaimed Maisie; "the idea of you two girls having a lunch party!"

"And cooking everything ourselves," added Dolly. "Dot's in the kitchen yet, struggling with foods. Take off your things."

The guests complied, keeping up a perfect stream of chatter as they looked about and admired everything in sight.

All had been there before, but not to a regular invited feast, and the occasion was a great one.

"If I had a house like this," declared Ethel Rawlins, "I wouldn't ask any more favours of Fate for twenty years!"

"Nor I," agreed Celia. "Isn't it wonderful! Don't you just adore it, Dolly?"

"Indeed we do — yes, all right!" This last in answer to a frantic call from Dotty, in the kitchenette. "Excuse me, girls, Dot's come to grief, somehow. Amuse yourselves till I come back."

Dolly hurried to the rescue, and found Dotty throwing dish-towels into the croquette kettle.

"The old thing caught fire somehow!" she exclaimed, dancing about, "and, I never thought of it before, but, Dolly, do you think the house is insured?"

"Goodness, I don't know! But never mind that,

now; it isn't going to burn down. Can we save the croquettes, or what shall we have for lunch?"

Gingerly with a fork they picked up the towels, and found a number of black, dried-up cylinders that had once been Dotty's carefully shaped croquettes.

"Nothing doing!" said Dolly, philosophically, as she gazed at the charred remains. "You got the lard too hot, Dotsie."

"So I notice! Well, we'll have to cut out the croquette course."

"No matter. I'll skip over home and get a platter of cold lamb, there was a lot left last night, I know. You chin with the girls, and I'll fly."

Dolly scooted out at the back door of Treasure House, and across to her own home, and soon returned with a dainty dish of sliced lamb.

Then she busied herself with her own allotment of the preparations, and began to heat the soup.

"'Most ready?" said Dotty, flying in suddenly, and startling Dolly so she nearly dropped the pepper-box.

"Yes, in a minute. Fill the water glasses, set the fruit thing-a-ma-jigs on the table, cut the bread,— oh, no, we have rolls,— well, get them fixed, and hunt up the butter and — oh, my gracious, the salad has upset!"

"Not really!"

"Not entirely; I can straighten it out, I guess. Oh, why did we ask them to come so early! I've heaps to do. You put the cocoa in the silver pot, won't you? and, oh Dot, the olives haven't been opened yet!"

"I'll do it. Where's the opener-thing?"

"I don't know. I guess there isn't any over here —"

"I guess there is. Here it is, but it won't work. You give it a pull, Dolly."

Both girls, together and in turn, pulled at the refractory cork of the olive bottle,— for without olives, no school girl lunch is complete! But it refused to budge. Now, the ways of corks are most mischievous. Just as they were about to give it up, a last strong pull brought the cork out with a jerk, and the two D's fell in a heap in the middle of the kitchenette, with such a clatter of accompanying dishes, that the guests came running out to see what was the matter.

They found their hostesses scrambling up from the floor, laughing, but pretty much upset withal.

"It was that old cork," explained Dotty. "It wouldn't come out, and then all of a sudden it couldn't get out quick enough! 'Scuse us girls, for such a

racketty performance, but truly, everything is going screw-wampus to-day!"

"Let us help," begged Grace; "oh, do let us, please."

"Yes, do help," said Dolly, who was at the end of her rope. "You, Grace, see if everything is on the table that ought to be there. Ethel, please put some sugar in this bowl,— there's the box,— and Celia, won't you set these salad plates on the side table? Maisie May, you just stand around and look pretty, — I don't know of anything else for you to do. Now, I'll take up the soup, oh, no, I won't. We must eat the fruit thingumbob first. Come on, let's do that. I don't see how people *ever* get the things ready at the right time. Everything here is either too ready or not enough so. Come on, friends. You sit here, Maisie, and Grace, here."

Laughing gaily, the girls took their seats, and delightedly attacked the dainty first course. It was a combination of various fruits,— orange, pineapple and crimson cherries, served in delicate slender-stemmed glasses.

"I just love this fruit muddle," said Maisie, "and this is the best ever! Who made it?"

"I did," said Dolly, with pardonable pride. "It

took most of the morning, though, that's why everything else fell behind. It isn't hard to make, but it takes forever."

The Two D's were to take turns in changing the plates, so Dolly rose to bring in the soup. Very pretty it looked, in the bouillon cups, but after the first taste Celia hurriedly caught up her glass of water.

"Look out!" she cautioned, but too late. Nearly every girl had taken a spoonful of soup, before she discovered it was burning hot with pepper! When Dotty had come upon Dolly in the act of seasoning the soup, she startled her so, that far more pepper went in than was meant, and the result was appalling.

Eagerly the girls sipped the cold water, and with tears running down their cheeks from the pungent taste and odour, they protested that "they didn't mind it!"

"I like peppery soup," said Grace, politely.

"But you don't like soupy pepper, do you?" gasped Dotty, "and that's what this is!"

Then Dolly, crestfallen and chagrined, but trying to be merry, took away the soup, and brought the cold lamb, and the salad.

The lamb was all that it should be; but the salad dressing had separated itself into its original in-

gredients, after the manner of some ill-natured salad dressings. This was harrowing, but Dolly smiled bravely, and acknowledged it was her first attempt.

"Don't you mind, Doll," said Grace, comfortingly; "not one of us could make a better one. And with the olives and all, you don't notice anything the matter."

But the crowning blow came with the dessert. The girls had made lovely home-made ice cream, and had frozen it with the greatest care. This they felt sure would be right, for they had made it before many times.

But, alas, by some oversight, the freezer had been left outdoors in the sun, the ice had been insufficient, and the result, instead of a finely moulded form, was a lot of thick creamy liquid.

"Don't you care!" cried Ethel. "I just *love* soft ice cream. Call it a pudding, and let it go at that. Come, Dot, brace up. Who cares for the occasional slips of young housekeepers? Cut the cake and pass it to us, and give us some of that delicious-looking ice cream custard!"

The cake had turned out fairly decent, but not up to the mark. Dotty was a good cake maker but making it in a strange kitchen and baking it in a strange oven had made a difference, and the fluffy

sponge cake she usually achieved, showed up a close, almost soggy, and very sticky compound.

"I'm just ready to cry," said Dotty, as she looked at the dessert, from which they had hoped such great things.

"Don't do anything so foolish," said Dolly. "We slipped up on 'most everything, but we tried hard enough, goodness knows! If you're hungry, girls, there are cookies in the cupboard, and there's plenty of cocoa."

"I'll take some, please," said Maisie, so plaintively, that they all laughed. And then they all fell to on the previously despised cookies, and under the cheer and raillery of their guests, the two D's finally regained their poise, and laughed themselves at their chapter of accidents.

"Call it 'The Feast That Failed,' and let it go at that," said Dotty.

"It wasn't a failure at all," protested Celia. "We've had heaps of fun."

"Yes, it *was* a failure," insisted Dotty; "and we'll have to learn to do better. Why, when the boys come home, they'll make all sorts of fun of us, if we can't do better than this."

"We *will* do better than this," declared Dolly.

"We'll ask you again, girls, and show you how great an improvement second attempts are!"

"Then I'm glad of this frolic," said Grace, "for it means we get two parties instead of one."

"Just what you might have expected," said Trudy, laughing till the tears rolled down her cheeks at the D's' account of the feast. "You little geese, not to know that you couldn't do it! Now, I'll take you in hand, and give you a few practical lessons, and then when the boys come home, you can astonish them with your skill and dexterity."

"All right," said Dolly. "I'll try to learn, won't you, Dots?"

"Well, I rather just guess yes!" exclaimed the other D.

CHAPTER XIV

NEWS INDEED!

"I HAVE a piece of news for you," said Mr. Fayre, as the family sat at dinner one night.

"What is it, Dads?" asked Dolly, as her father paused.

He was still silent, and his face looked a little grave as his eyes rested in turn on his two daughters and on their guest, for Dotty was still there. After a moment, he said:

"I'm afraid it will hit you hard, Trudy, and I know it will make Dolly miserable. So I hate to tell you. But it must be told. I've been ordered to Buffalo."

For a moment the girls didn't take in just what he meant, then Trudy cried, "Go to Buffalo! To live? All of us?"

"Well, Trude, I certainly couldn't leave any of my family behind me. Mother and I are going, and I guess you girls better come along too."

Dolly sat looking at her father, her eyes very wide and very blue as she thought over what he was saying.

"We can't do it," she said, finally, and as if she

were disposing of the whole matter: "I can't go away from Berwick to live."

"But, Dolly dear, where would you live, here alone? In Treasure House?"

"She can live with me!" exclaimed Dotty, excitedly. "Why, she'll *have* to. I won't let my Dollyrinda go away from Berwick. She's mine, and I've got to keep her!"

"Is it really true, Father?" asked Trudy, looking very thoughtful. "Must we go?"

"Yes, dear," answered Mr. Fayre. "The company has transferred me to the Buffalo office, and I must obey or leave the road. You know a freight superintendent is under orders from his superiors."

"There isn't anybody superior to you, Daddy," said Dolly, who was looking blank and stunned at the news she had heard. "Can't you tell the president, or whoever is sending you, that you won't go?"

"I might, Dolly; but that might mean my entire dismissal, and who'd buy your hair-ribbons then, my girl?"

"But to Buffalo!" wailed Dolly. "We might as well go to Timbuctoo!"

"It's awful," said Trudy, with a long-drawn sigh. "Did you know about it, Mother?"

"Yes, some days ago. And I knew how sorry you

girls would feel. But I know you'll brace up and meet the disappointment bravely, for Father's sake. He doesn't want to hurt his girls so, but he can't help it."

"What will Bert say?" said Dolly; "won't he be mad!"

"I don't think Bert will care as much as you girls," began Mr. Fayre, when Dotty interrupted: "My Dollyrinda *shan't* go! I won't have it! I'll make my father buy her for me, and keep her here! That's what I'll do!"

"Don't be silly, Dots," said Dolly, who was beginning to realise that this thing was a fact. Apparently her parents had already become used to the idea, and were regretting it principally on the girls' account.

"Do you want to go, Father?" Dolly asked. "Would you just as lieve live in horrid old Buffalo as here in beautiful, lovely Berwick?"

"No, Dolly, I wouldn't. But I must obey orders."

"Whose orders?"

"The general manager, child."

"Why, that's Mr. Forbes, isn't it? Bernice Forbes' father?"

"That's the man."

"Is he sending you away?"

Not directly; that is, not personally. But he and the board of directors have combined to decree this thing. They consider it an honour, Dolly. It is a better position, financially, and I have earned it by my integrity and exemplary behaviour!" Mr. Fayre smiled at his younger daughter, and was so honestly sorry for her that he didn't know what to do.

"Well, Daddy, I can't stand it," and Dolly shook her head. "I'll just die, that's all. I couldn't live anywhere except here. You couldn't get me another Treasure House, or another Dotty Rose, or all our crowd at school, or anything that I have here."

"But Buffalo may be full of Dotty Roses and Treasure Houses and school crowds, that are heaps nicer than the Berwick variety!" Mr. Fayre tried to speak gaily, but at these words Dolly burst into tears and Dotty followed suit.

The family left the table, and though they tried to have calm and general conversation the effort was vain, and very soon the Two D's went off up-stairs.

They went to Dolly's pretty bedroom, and here their woe broke out afresh.

"Oh," wailed Dolly, "I can't leave this room, this pretty, sweet, lovely room, and go to old Buffalo, to sleep in an attic with rats gnawing me!"

"Why would you do that?" and Dotty stopped

midway of a sob to understand this dire prognostication.

"Well, it's as bad as that, whatever it is."

"But if your father gets more money, more salary, you know, maybe you'll have a grand house, like the Forbeses."

"I don't want a grand house. If it's in Buffalo at all, I'd just as lieve have the ratty attic as anything else!" and Dolly renewed her weeping. She rocked her plump body back and forth in paroxysms of woe, and wailed out new horrors as they came to her distorted imagination.

"*I* know the sort of girls they'll have there. All wearing shirtwaists and old ribbon bands round their foreheads! Oh, I know!"

"How do you know?" and Dotty's admiration rose at these strange revelations.

"Oh, I sort of see them, the horrid bunch! I hate to see girls of our age in shirtwaists, and I *know* they'll all have them. And the boys will be horrid, too. Not nice, like our brothers and Tad and Tod, but all sort of outgrown!"

"My! Buffalo must be an awful place!"

"It isn't only Buffalo, it's *any* place in the United States, except Berwick. Don't you see it, Dotty?

Don't you *know* it must be so? And if not just as I've described, it's something equally worse!"

"Yes, I s'pose so," returned Dotty, awed by this instinctive knowledge of Dolly's.

"But I've got to go, all the same. So I've got to make up my mind to it."

"You shan't go, and you shan't make up your mind to it! I won't have it. Say, Doll, how about this? If you do go,— you visit me six months every year, and I'll visit you six months."

"No; if I go, I shall give you up entirely, and get a new chum up there. I can't have my most intimate friend a million miles away. And you know our people wouldn't agree to that six months business."

"You'll get a new chum! Dorinda Fayre, I think you're the most awful girl I ever saw! I believe you *want* to go to your horrid old Buffalo, and have a girl with a shirtwaist on, for your intimate friend, and a band around her forehead!"

"Oh, hush up, Dotty! I didn't mean that, and you know it! But I'm beside myself, I don't know what I'm saying!"

And then the two girls gave way to such desperate and uncontrollable sobbing, that Trudy heard them and came to their room.

"Dolly! Dolly!" she exclaimed. "Oh, you poor little girl! Don't cry so, darling. Try to stop,—you'll make yourself ill. Dotty, be quiet, dear."

Trudy's soft voice calmed the turbulent ones a little, and she went on talking.

"Listen, Dollykins. I don't want to leave Berwick, either. I have lots of friends here —"

"And beaux," put in Dotty, suddenly realising Trudy's trials, too.

"Yes," Trudy agreed, smiling, "and beaux. But probably beaux grow in Buffalo, and friends of other sorts too. Now, I don't in the least undervalue what it means to you two girls to part, but, Dolly, it can't be helped. Father has to go. Now, oughtn't we to help him, by unselfishly forgetting our wishes, and going cheerfully? That's the only way we can help Dad, and I think it's our duty to do it."

"I know it is," sobbed Dolly, "but I always *did* hate to do my duty!"

"But you always do it," and Trudy smiled at her little sister. "I've never known you to shirk a duty because you hated to do it."

"But I never had such a big, horrid, awful bad duty before."

"No; and that's all the more reason why you must meet this one bravely. Now, don't think any more

about the whole thing to-night. Go to bed and to sleep, and to-morrow things will look brighter."

The girls both felt sure they would lie awake all night, but so exhausted were they by their strenuous grief, they fell asleep before they knew it.

But Dolly woke early in the dawn of morning, and she lay there in her pretty green room, thinking it out. And somehow, her thinking cheered her, for at rising time, Dotty awoke to see a smiling Dolly bending over her.

"Wake up, old sleepyhead! Get your eyes open, and rise to greet the morn!"

Dotty rubbed her half-open black eyes, and strove to remember what was the matter after all. Then it all came back to her.

"Buffalo!" she said, sitting up in bed. "Buff-a-lo!"

"Never mind Buffalo," and Dolly kept on smiling. "You wake up, and get yourself up into Berwick. And if you'll be a good girl, some day I'll tell you something."

"You've been thinking it out!" exclaimed Dotty. "I know you! Don't deny it!"

"'Course I've been thinking it out. But don't you tell anybody that I have. You get dressed, instanter! Do you hear?"

Dotty heard, and obeyed, and soon two calm, serene girls were on their way down to breakfast.

The subject was not mentioned at the table. The elders purposely avoided it, and the Two D's had no desire to discuss it.

It was only as she was starting for school, that Dolly said to her mother, with a quivering lip, "Mumsie — when —"

"In about a month, dear," said Mrs. Fayre, kissing the trembling mouth. "Don't begin to think about it yet."

The two D's started off in silence. After a block or so, Dotty said, "Shall you tell the girls?"

"No," said Dolly, shortly. "Don't mention it, Dot. This afternoon in the house, I'll tell you something."

Dotty could scarcely wait till afternoon, and then when that time arrived, Dolly decreed that they should learn their lessons first, before she told the "something."

"You're getting terribly good!" grumbled Dotty.

"I know it. I've *got* to be. Perhaps *then* I'll get something I want."

So the two studied like everything, until they both declared they really knew all the next day's lessons. They even heard each other some of the very hardest

ones, and then, they sat down together before the fire for the "something."

"Here it is," said Dolly, soberly. "I'm going to get Father let off from that transfer to Buffalo."

"You can't," said Dotty, with an air of calm conviction.

"I know I can't, but I'm going to all the same. Father doesn't want to go, neither does Mother. Nor Trudy; nor me. So why should we go?"

"'Cause your father is sent."

"Yes, that's just it. But I'm going to get him unsent."

"Amend the Constitution?"

"Just about that. Now, look here, Dot: Who is sending Dad?"

"Mr. Forbes."

"Of course he is. He's Father's boss. Now, who is Mr. Forbes' boss?"

"The president of the railroad, I s'pose."

"Not at all. Mr. Forbes is bossed and ruled and absolutely commanded by —"

"Bernice!"

"Yes, of course. He worships and idolises his motherless girl. And, listen, now; through Bernice I'm going to get Father repealed,— or whatever you call it."

"Can you?"

"I will, whether I can or not."

"Will your father like it?"

"He won't know, till it's all over. And if I fail, which I won't, he need never know. I've thought it out, and it isn't wrong; there isn't a wrong thing about it. Bernice can make her father do anything in the world she wants to. I know that. So she can get him to change his mind about my father, if I can persuade her to do it. I mean, if I can persuade her to persuade her father."

"It's a fine scheme, Dollops, but I can't seem to see it succeeding. Bernice can make her father do anything she wants for herself, but this is different. Why should she bother her father for your father's sake?"

"I don't know," and Dolly looked uncertain; "but I'm going to try to make her do it, and sumpum tells me I shall conquer in the fight!"

Dolly looked so jubilant, so already victorious, that Dotty hadn't the heart to express further doubt. And too, Dotty had great faith in Dolly's powers of success when she set to work in earnest. And she surely was very much in earnest now.

"Aren't you going to tell Trudy or your mother?"

"No; nobody at all but you. Maybe I'll tell Bert,

when he comes home for Thanksgiving. He could help me."

"*I* can help you! I mean, I will, if you'll tell me what to do."

"Indeed you can help me, Dot. I couldn't do it at all without your help. See here, you don't understand yet. If Bernice makes her father do this thing, it'll be because she herself wants me to stay in Berwick. And here's why. Because,— if Bernice does what I want her to, I'm going to make her the most popular girl in town!"

CHAPTER XV

DOLLY AND BERNICE

Dolly went alone to see Bernice. She had wanted Dotty with her for aid and sympathy, but on thinking it over, she decided it would be better to go alone first.

The Forbes house was impressive, the man who opened the door to Dolly's ring was awe-inspiring, but of these things Dolly was not afraid. Her fear was that she would not be able to present in the most persuasive way, the strange matter on which she had come.

When Bernice came into the reception room, she found Dolly so deep in thought she scarcely heard her.

"Hello, Dolly Fayre," said the hostess, looking at her inquiringly. "What do you want?"

"You never could guess," returned Dolly, not resenting this somewhat ungracious greeting.

"Oh, yes, I can, you want to beg some money for some High School performance, or else you want me to be on some rubbishy old committee. You never

came here just because you wanted to see me,— myself."

This frightened Dolly, for it struck perilously near the truth. But she plunged boldly in.

"You're not far out, Bernice, and yet it's nothing about school. Can any one hear us?"

"No; but I'll shut this door. Now, what is it?"

Bernice's curiosity was roused by Dolly's air of repressed excitement, and her very evident embarrassment. At least, something unusual was coming.

"Bernice," she began, "you know my father is in the employ of your father's railroad. My father is in the freight department —"

"Yes, I know it. What of it?"

"Well, your father has ordered my father to be transferred to Buffalo."

"Oh, Dolly, I don't want you to go to Buffalo. Why, you're the only friend I have in Berwick."

"Well, this is the point, Bernice. You ought to have more friends in Berwick. With your home and everything, you ought to be the most popular girl in town."

"I'm not!" and Bernice laughed grimly.

"That's partly your own fault, and partly not. Now, if you'll persuade your father to retract that

order and let my father stay in Berwick, I'll make you popular,— I will honest!"

Dolly's eyes beamed with earnestness. Her plea was out, now it was to follow it up.

"I know that sounds crazy," she went on, "but think a minute, Bernice. Your father and mine are splendid business men, so perhaps we inherit their business talent. So let's make a business deal. If I can make good, and put you in the front ranks of our crowd, will you try to coax your father to do what I want?"

"Why, Dolly Fayre, what an idea!"

"I know it. But I don't want to leave Berwick, none of us do, and yet, we'll have to go, unless your father changes the orders. I'd ask him myself, only I know he wouldn't listen to me, but he would to you."

"Does your father know you're doing this?"

"Mercy, no! I wouldn't have him know it for the world! It isn't wrong, Bernice, and it isn't underhanded or anything like that. You know yourself, how the railroad men are ordered here and there. Now it seems to me some one else might as well be sent to Buffalo, and my father left in the New York office, where he is now. Don't you think so? If only your father will agree."

Dolly looked very pleading. Her little face looked up into Bernice's with a wistful, hopeful smile. Her hands were clasped in the intensity of her feeling, and her voice quivered as she made her plea.

Bernice looked at her. "I don't know why I should do this for you, Dolly Fayre," she said, at last. "You're the most popular girl in Berwick, you and Dotty Rose. Now, if you go away, I'll stand a better chance of getting in your crowd, in your place, than if you stay here."

Dolly hadn't thought of this. Nor did it strike her at the moment what a selfish and self-seeking spirit Bernice showed. She knit her brows as she thought deeply what to say next.

"You see," Bernice went on, "I've always wanted to be in your set. It's the nicest set of all. And when I was in Grammar School of course I couldn't, but now we're all in High, I want to be one of you. And I'll do anything I can to get there. But I think I'd stand a better chance with you away. Then I'd be friends with Dotty Rose in your place, maybe."

Dolly looked aghast. Such presumption! But the absurdity of the idea brought her to her senses.

"Not much you wouldn't, Bernie!" she said. "Dot is willing to do a lot for you if I stay here. But she knows I'm saying all this to you, and if you

don't help me about Father's position with the road, you can just bet Dotty Rose won't have anything to do with you, nor will any one else in our set!"

"Look here, Dolly, isn't this what the boys call a 'hold-up'?"

Dolly laughed. "It did sound like that, but listen, Bernice. It's a straight proposition. You want to be in our set, really in it and of it. Well, I'll see to it that you get there, if you'll coax your father to let my father stay here. That's all, and I don't think it's mean or hold-uppish. I think it's a fair deal between us. I don't know what my father would say if he knew I asked you, but even though he might think it undignified or silly, he couldn't say it was really wrong. Now, could he?"

"No," agreed Bernice, "there's nothing wrong about it. But can you do your part?"

"Can you?"

"Yes, I know I could. I can make Dad do anything. He spoils me,— and he'd move to Kamchatka if I wanted to, or send anybody else there if I said so."

"Yes, I knew he was like that. It's a shame, Bernie, with all your lovely home and privileges and everything, that you're not top of the heap here."

"Well, I'm not. And I'm not at all sure, Dolly,

Fayre, that you can help to put me anywhere near the top."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"How? By making the girls come to see me? Or by forcing the boys to dance with me? I know of your efforts in those directions, and don't you s'pose they make me feel cheap?"

"Bernice, I don't wonder. And I'm glad you spoke like that. No, I don't mean to do it that way, — not entirely. But if we go into this bargain, you and I, it must be a real bargain, and you must help,— not hinder any part of it."

"Oh, Dolly, I'd only be too glad to help. If I could be popular,— I don't mean actually top of the heap, but just liked by the crowd, I'd be so glad. And if you could help bring it about, I'd make father do what you want. I know I could. But, I won't do it unless you do what you say you will."

"All right, Bernice," and Dolly looked thoughtful. "But, you see, if Dad's orders are changed, I suppose it ought to be done at once. And I can't do my part all in a jiffy, it will naturally take a little time."

"Yes, I see that. When does your father expect to go?"

"In about a month."

"That'll be the middle of December. S'pose I get

Father to postpone the date till, say, after Christmas. The first of the year they often make changes. That'll give you nearly two months, and if things are working all right by then, I can easily make Father let you stay here. Why, if I told him I wanted you here in Berwick, he'd make any arrangements to keep you here."

"Then do it now!" and Dolly's eyes danced at this easy settlement of the whole matter.

"Nixy! You haven't done a thing yet! I don't want to be mean about this, but — well, you know what I *do* want and it's up to you."

"All right, Bernice. Will you ask your father, to-night, to put off Dad's transfer till after the holidays?"

"Yes, I will, and he'll do it. Now, what are you going to do first?"

"First of all, I'm going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle!" Dolly's eyes were dancing now. Her aim was accomplished, at least, in part, and her well thought out campaign was about to be begun.

"You see, Bernice, all I can do will not count at all unless *you* do something to help along. And what you've got to do, is to change your way with 'em. Now, wait a minute. You're pretty and bright and you have lovely clothes and all that, but you go

around with a chip on your shoulder! Yes, you do, and it upsets your whole apple-cart! Now, you've just simply *got* to be sunny and sweet and if you think you see little slights or mean things, swallow them and keep on smiling. I know that sounds hard, even sounds silly, but that's all there is to it. You've got to break down that sort of barrier you've built up around you. Do you know what they say about you? They say you're stuck-up. That's an awful thing in our crowd. We don't like stuck-up people. You're so rich, you see, so much richer than any of the rest of us, that we feel sort of shy of you, unless you come down to our level. I mean our level as to grandeur and style and those things. We don't care if you have silk dresses when we have gingham, if you don't rub it in. Oh, *don't* you see what I mean?"

"I don't know as I do, Dolly," and Bernice looked very serious. "But I begin to, and I do believe I can learn. But it's so hard when everybody turns the cold shoulder, and nobody wants to speak to me."

"But it's so much your own fault! Have you ever tried, real hard, to be nice to any of the girls? Real up and down *nice?*"

"No, I've been too busy paying them back for the snubs they gave me."

"That's just it! And they only snubbed you because they thought you were snubbing them. Oh, I know all about it, Bernice. Don't you s'pose I've heard them talk you over? And the boys. They say you're a pretty girl and a good dancer, but — well, I'm going to tell you right out, for I believe it will help you,— they call you a lemon!"

"They do, do they? Then I don't want anything to do with them!"

"Yes, you do! Now, hold on; they call you that, 'cause you *are* lemony to them! You know yourself that you snip and snap the boys awfully. They won't stand it."

"But, Dolly, I haven't the sweet sunny disposition that you have."

"Then get it! You can, if you want to. Good gracious, Bernice, if you *want* to be popular and have a good time, isn't it just too easy to quit being a sour old lemon and work up an amiable manner? Anybody would think I was asking you to do something hard! Why, it's easier to be pleasant than not, if you only think so! Now, that's *part* of your part. Next, you must invite people here."

"Give a party?"

"Yes, if you like. I meant ask just a few at a time. But it would be a good scheme to start in with

quite a party. Not too gorgeous,— but a nice, *right* party."

"It'll be my birthday week after next, I might have it then."

"Just the thing! You do that, and let me help plan your party. You mustn't have a grand ball, you know."

"I'll do just as you say, Dolly," replied Bernice, meekly.

"All right," and Dolly laughed. "This is like planning a campaign, and I s'pose it's sort of foolish for girls of our age, but you're in wrong, and if I can set you right, I'm only too glad to. And I *can*, if you'll do as I say."

"I'm jolly *glad* to do as you say! But will the crowd come to my party?"

"'Course they will. I'll make 'em. Now, wait, I know you don't like to have them come 'cause they're made to, but it's got to be that way at first, and then it's up to you to make it so pleasant they'll want to come again."

"But seems to me *I'm* doing most of this."

"Oh, that's the way it seems to you, does it? *Does it!* Well, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you *try* it without me, and see where you bring up!"

Dolly was a little annoyed at Bernice's readiness to

accept her advices and ignore the very real help that Dolly was able and willing to give.

"I know, Dolly. I sort of forgot myself."

"Well, you try to remember yourself! And remember too, that while I want you to be one of us, at the same time, I'm bothering about you for the reason I told you when I first came here. I'm not doing it for your sake, but for my own. And, another thing. I want to stay in Berwick mostly, because Dotty Rose is here, and she and I are intimate friends and always will be. She's ready and glad to help us in this scheme, but it's because she wants to keep me here in Berwick. So, Bernice Forbes, don't you try to come between Dot and me, for it won't do a bit of good and it will do you a lot of harm."

"I won't, honest, Dolly. But does Dotty know all about your plan?"

"Every bit. And I tell you, Bernie, if Dot and I set out to make you have a good time, you'll *have* it, and that's all there is about that!"

"I believe you, and I'm glad you're so outspoken, Dolly. Now, honest, I'm going to try, but you don't know how hard it is to be nice to those girls when they turn aside and whisper to each other about me and all things like that."

"They won't do that, Bernice, if you act differently toward them. Now, look here. You talk over your party with your father and if he says you can have it, get your invitations out soon. My brother and Dot's will be home for Thanksgiving,— when is your birthday?"

"The 30th of November."

"Good! They'll be here then. Well, you ask your father about your party,— and — about that other matter, will you?"

"Yes, I will, to-night. And he'll say yes to both."

CHAPTER XVI

BROTHERS AND FUDGE

It was a few days later that Mr. Fayre announced to his family the news that his transfer of locality had been postponed until after the Christmas holidays.

"Perhaps you won't have to go at all, Father," said Trudy.

"Perhaps not," agreed Mr. Fayre. "These matters are uncertain. I should be glad not to leave Berwick, for I like my New York business, and my suburban home; but what is to be will be, whether it ever comes to pass or not."

This was one of Mr. Fayre's favourite nonsense speeches and always made the girls laugh. Dolly laughed now, perhaps a little more than the occasion demanded, for she knew a small joke of her own.

Dotty, too, controlled her smiles discreetly and as the subject was lightly passed over, no one suspected that the postponement was due to Dolly's endeavours.

"Bernice Forbes is going to have a party," Dolly said, after a time.

"Is she?" said Mrs. Fayre, interestedly. "When?"

"On the thirtieth. It's her birthday. I 'spect it will be a lovely party. Can I have a new frock, Mother?"

"Why, I think so. You need one more new party dress this winter, and you may as well have it for that occasion."

"I thought Bernice wasn't much liked by your crowd," said Trudy.

"Well, she isn't a favourite," said Dolly, slowly, "but I think she's better liked than she used to be. Anyway, everybody'll be glad to go to her party."

"Yes," said Trudy, "and then talk about her afterward! I think that's mean."

"I do too," chimed in Dotty. "But Bernice is nicer than she used to be, more pleasant, you know. And maybe there won't be anything to say about her party, except nice things."

"She'll probably have a brass band and supper from New York," laughed Trudy.

"Well, I want you to be nice to her, Dolly," said Mr. Fayre. "Mr. Forbes has been exceedingly kind to me of late, and if you can do anything for his motherless girl, you do it."

"Yes, Dad," said Dolly, meekly, though her heart was singing for joy that she was already carrying out her father's wishes.

"Why I thought Mr. Forbes was an awful stiff, stern man," said Trudy.

"He is," returned her father. "And he's a just and particular man, in his business relations, as, of course, he ought to be."

"Couldn't you ask him, Father, not to let us go away from Berwick?" suggested Dolly, timidly.

"Gracious, no, child. I wouldn't dream of such a thing! If he says go, I must go. But he spoke today as if the matter were still in abeyance—"

"In where?"

"Never mind your geography, Dollums. You wouldn't find abeyance in any Christian country. I mean he spoke as if my going away is still uncertain."

"Oh! Well, I'm glad of it. Every day here counts."

Before Bernice's birthday party came off Dolly had much to do. And Dotty ably aided and abetted her plans.

They lost no opportunity to hint to the girls and boys of Bernice's good traits. They even said to some, that she had been misunderstood and enlisted their sympathies for the new candidate for favours.

Bernice herself tried hard to do her part. Naturally shy, hers was the disposition that takes quick

offence at a seeming slight, and supersensitive to such, she often felt like returning a haughty stare. But she remembered Dolly's instructions, and managed fairly well to control her quick temper, and overlook many things.

A few days before the party Bob Rose and Bert Fayre came home from their school for the Thanksgiving vacation.

Great rejoicing was in the two families at this event. Dotty had returned home, Genie being all well again, and Treasure House was the daily meeting place of the quartette.

"My stars! girls, but this is fine!" declared Bert, as the Two D's showed off their possessions.

"You bet it is!" chimed in Bob, as he paraded round the House, taking in all its glories.

It was the day of their return, they hadn't been in town ten minutes before they were rushed over to the wonderful Treasure House.

"And catch onto the dinky kitchen business! Can you cook, oh, Treasure ladies?"

"Some," said Dolly, smiling at the recollection of the feast that failed.

"Pshaw! We'll show you how. Say we begin now. What you got on hand?"

"Oh, wait, Bert! don't upset things!" cried Dolly,

in dismay, for her brother was ruthlessly rummaging in the cupboard for goodies.

"Unhand me, villain!" and Bert shook off Dolly's restraining hand. "I seek what I seek!" and with a flourish he brought out a package of chocolate and the sugar bowl. "Fee fi fo fum, I smell the scent of Fudgerum. Go to it, Dollops! See how quick you can turn out a panful!" Bert took out his watch as if to time her. "One, two three! Go!"

Falling into the spirit of the thing, Dolly whisked out a sauce-pan and long-handled spoon, while twice as quickly, Dotty seized a knife and began to shave off the chocolate. Fudge was a thing they *could* make, with no chance of failure, so the two worked smoothly together, and in an incredibly short time, the delectable compound was cooling, to be cut into squares.

"You're the right sort of sisters for a chap to have," said Bob, looking admiringly at the two smiling, flushed faces before him.

"You're two pretty good brothers," Dotty flashed back, and Bert remarked. "Cut out the taffy, and look after the fudge."

So they marked it off in squares and diamonds, and the impatient boys began on it at once.

"Guess we'll bring home some chaps for the Christ-

mas Vake, hey, Bob?" and Bert nodded at his chum.

"That's a go. But not many, for this house has all the modern improvements, except size, it seems to me."

"Oh, it holds quite a good many," Dolly said; "we've had sixteen here at a time and it wasn't so awfully crowded."

"All right. We'll bring Chalk and Cheese, eh, Bert?"

"Yep. Give me another piece of fudge, Dollums."

"You'll be very exceedingly ill," remarked Dolly, gravely, as she handed her brother the plate. "Now, see here, Bert, and you, too, Bob, I've got you sweetened up, I want to tell you something. To ask you something, rather."

"Clever Dolly! First fudge, then demands. Well, go ahead. To the half of my kingdom!"

"Now, listen, I'm serious. It's about Bernice Forbes."

"No, you don't!" and Bert grinned. "I know the fair Bernie! None for this citizen, thank you! What you want? Me to take her to a party, I'll bet. Well, you lose! See?"

"Now, Bert, be quiet," and Dolly gave him a pleading glance. "Don't jump at things so. Be still a minute."

"All right," put in Bob. "My chum, at his sister's request, will now be mum. But I'll take the floor. I hereby assent that Us Two, being for the moment in a position to grace the fair town of Berwick by our gracious presence, utterly decline to spoil our all too short stay in these parts, by so much as an allusion to the impossible Forbes damsel."

"But you *must* listen," and Dolly looked so honestly distressed, that the boys woke up to the fact that she was serious.

"Fire away, then," said Bert, "but cut it short. What's it all about?"

"It's this," burst out Dotty, for Dolly couldn't seem to find the right words. "We're booming Bernice. And you two have got to help!"

"Help! Help!" cried Bert, faintly. "Do I get you aright?"

"You do!" and Dotty wagged her black head, vigorously. "You sure do! Now, the situation is this —"

"Let me tell," said Dolly, who had recovered her nerve. "For reasons of my own, which I will not explain at present, but which affect you, Bert, as much as me, it is necessary that we make Bernice popular —"

"What!" exploded Bob. "Bernice popular! Oh, Jiminy Crickets! that's a good one!"

"Yes, popular," repeated Dolly, severely. "And if it seems so difficult to you, then there will be all the more glory in accomplishing it. Now, don't stop to argue; just realise that we're going to do it. Look on it as a stunt, to be wrastled somehow, and — and chip in and help us. Are you wid us or agin us?"

Dolly was standing now, and flung out her arms like an importunate orator, pleading for the sympathies of his audience. A determined fire shone in her deep blue eyes, a determined smile curved her red lips, and as she paused for a reply, Bob shouted, "To the last ditch!"

"Good for you!" and Dolly thanked him with a beaming smile. "Now, Bert, of course you're in it, too. So here's the game. We four are to do all we can, in a clever and quiet way, to make Bernice Forbes' party a howling success, and —"

"Told you it was a party!" growled Bert. "Hate parties!"

"No, you don't hate parties. You love 'em. And this party is next Tuesday, and if you two boys don't go in and win,— for me — you're no good!"

"What's it to you, Doll?" asked her brother, detecting the earnest note in Dolly's voice.

"It means a lot, Bert," and Dolly's voice shook a little. "But never mind that now. You two just do as we girls —"

"Ours not to reason why," exclaimed Bob; "ours but to do or die! and we'll do anything or anybody you say. Now, as to details, what is our special rôle at this party racket?"

"Just this," said Dotty. "To push up Bernice's stock! Be awfully nice to her yourselves. Make the other boys be nice to her, too. See that she has a partner for every dance and a good time at every game,— or whatever they have. Hover round her at supper time, and in general make her think she's It!"

"Well, Sweet Sister, what you say, goes! But you've given us a pretty large order! You know the lady, I take it?"

"Yes, but you don't. At least, you don't know that she's a heap nicer than she used to be. Also, you don't know what a great big whopping reason there is for all this. If you did, you'd — why, you'd fly over there at once, there'd be no holding you!"

"And can't we know?"

"Not just now," said Dolly, looking mysterious. "Some day, if you're good, I may tell you. Till then, you must work in the dark. Oh, you *are* good

boys! I knew I could depend on you! Have some more fudge."

"Oh thank you *so* much! Say, if we promise to do all and more than mortal can ask to further that crazy project of yours, can we drop the subject for now?"

"Yes, but remember you've promised," and Dotty shook her finger at the two jolly boys, who were willing to please their sisters, but who took little interest in Bernice Forbes and her success.

"Seems to me," observed Bob, as they returned to discussion of Treasure House, "that this is too good a piece of property for two simple girls! Why, it's worthy of boy occupants. Want to rent it?"

"No-sir-ee, Bob!" laughed Dolly. "We've been weeks getting it into shape, and fixed just exactly as we want it, and we don't propose to have a lot of boys rampoosing all over it. You are invited to inspect it, — and then I don't know as you'll be asked again."

"Well, I like that! Why, we supposed you'd give us the freedom of it while we're at home, at least."

"Oh, we won't lock you out, except when we're studying," said Dotty. "But there won't be much studying while you're home, for it's our vacation too."

Just then a rap sounded on the brass knocker of

Treasure House, and Bob flung open the door to admit the three Rawlins and two Browns.

"Hullo," cried Tad and Tod together; "when did you fellows get home?"

"Just to-day," answered Bert, as they all said hullo to each other and then found seats for themselves on chairs, window-boxes or floor.

And then a general chattering broke loose. Everybody talked at once, and Bob and Bert were welcomed back like long lost brothers. But soon the boys all had their heads together, telling of Clayton's wonderful new football, and the girls had grouped themselves on the other side of the room and were eagerly discussing Bernice's party.

"We're going, now, Doll," shouted Bert. "Going over to Clayt's. All us fellows. Don't weep, ladies, but we *must* leave you now."

"All right," said Dotty. "We can spare you. Of course, we just hate to have you go, but if you must —"

"Oh, we'll come back. But it's too great a day to stay inside. You girls had better go out for a run yourselves."

"Maybe we will," said Dolly. "But wait a minute, boys. I want to ask you something. Won't

you each promise to dance twice with Bernice at her party?"

"Goodness, gracious! Bernice again!" and Tod Brown pretended to fall in a faint.

"Yes, again and yet and all the time!" declared Dolly, laughing at Tod's ridiculous antics. "Now, own up, you know you can't go to her party and not dance with her —"

"Why go?" demanded Clayton.

"Of course you'll go! Wild horses couldn't keep you away! But as you're going, why not be decent about it, and do the really nice thing? If each of you will dance twice, and a few others once, she will have all the partners she wants."

"Are you her press agent, Dolly? What has come over you?" asked Tad.

"Never you mind about that. You just do as I say."

Now Tad was pretty apt to do as Dolly said, and so he bowed and scraped, saying, "What you say goes. Two is *my* number. Hey, fellows?"

"Two it is!" sung out Tod, and the rest voiced agreement. "Now can we go, mum?" begged Tad.

"Yes," said Dolly, "you're good boys, and you may run and play."

"What *are* you up to, Dolly?" asked Grace, as the boys ran off, laughing and jumping about.

"Gracie, you know how much I want to make Bernice more popular. Well, this is my chance, and I want all you girls to help me. If we take her up and are nice to her, the boys will do as we tell them, and the other girls will fall in line, and it will be all right. But if we fall down on it, the whole plan will drop through. *Do* be on on my side, won't you, Grace?"

Wily Dolly knew that Ethel would do whatever Grace did, and also that Maisie May would agree to whatever the Rawlinses agreed to.

"Yes, I will," declared Grace. "I think we haven't been very nice to Bernice, and I'm ready to try to be friends with her, if she'll have it. But, Dolly, you know she isn't very easy to be nice to."

"I know, Grace, but I think we'll find her better natured nowadays. Any way, let's be awful nice to her at her own party, and try to make it a grand success."

"All right," said Grace, "I'll do all *I* can."

"*Me* too," said Ethel, and then Dolly was satisfied.

CHAPTER XVII

BOOMING BERNICE

Dolly hesitated about telling Bert of her plans. She wanted him to know the importance of the matter, and yet, she feared he would disapprove of the whole idea. So she put off telling him, and now the very day had arrived, and she had a feeling that he must know before he went to the party.

Dolly was dressed early. She had on her new frock, and a dainty, pretty affair it was. Made of white net, it was frilled with many little outstanding ruffles, edged with blue silk. Tiny garlands of blue forget-me-nots headed the flounces, and edged the round neck of the bodice. Her golden curls were caught back by a pearl barrette and a delicate wreath of forget-me-nots encircled her head. Dotty's dress was just like Dolly's, with pink rosebuds in place of the blue flowers.

Of course the quartette were to go together, but there was yet nearly half an hour before time to start. Dolly sat in her room, thinking it out, and at last decided to tell Bert.

She went to his room, and found him deeply ab-

sorbed in tying his necktie. She sat down and waited, silently, being too wise to interrupt the engrossing performance.

At last the bow was completed to the young man's satisfaction.

"Hello, Dolls," he said, to her reflection in his mirror. "Here for criticism or commendation?" and he looked leniently on the pretty new frock.

"Neither. And we've only a few minutes, so, listen, Bert, I want to tell you something."

"Fire away," and the preoccupied boy looked over a pile of handkerchiefs.

Dolly spoke quickly and to the point. She told him of her bargain with Bernice and all she hoped from it.

"You see, I couldn't,—I just *couldn't* leave Berwick and Dot, so I tried this plan, and I hope,— oh,— I most *know* it will succeed!"

"Dorinda Fayre, you're a hummer!" was Bert's comment, and he sat down on the edge of his bed, and looked at his sister. "What *do* you s'pose dad would say if he knew?"

"He *mustn't* know. But, it isn't wrong, is it?"

"Why, no, I don't say it's wrong, exactly, but it's —why, Doll, it's crazy! That's what it is, crazy!"

"I don't care how crazy it is, if it works. Why,

Bert, anybody can go to Buffalo as well as for us to go. And probably the other man wants to go, and father doesn't. And I don't, and Trudy doesn't —"

"Does Trudy know of your stroke of state?"

"No, indeed. She'd tell, and dad and mother might put a stop to it. Now, Bert, *you'll* help me, *won't* you?"

Dolly had the whip hand, and she knew it. Bert was very proud of his pretty sister, and as she smiled winsomely, in all the bravery of her party array, he hadn't the heart to refuse her. Moreover, though he was amazed at her daring project, it seemed to him possible, owing to Mr. Forbes' indulgence of his daughter's whims.

"Why, of course, Dollops, I'll do whatever I can —"

"Oh, you *dear* old Bert! I was *so* afraid you wouldn't! You can do such heaps, you know! Now, let's start, and you must just remember every minute at the party, that you're booming Bernice. Get the boys to show her attentions, but *don't* for goodness' sake, let them know what you're up to!"

"Dollydoodle! Do you think I'm a ninny! Don't tell *me* how to conduct this publicity campaign! Give me credit for a grain of sense,— and leave all to me!"

Bert waved his hand with a lordly air, and Dolly felt a great weight lifted from her shoulders. If Bert took the initiative like that, he was sure to succeed.

"Does Bob know?" he asked.

"No, I don't want to tell Bob, if we can help it. Dotty promised not to tell anybody. Can't we manage without letting any more know, than do know?"

"I s'pect so, Kiddy. Run along, and get your bonnet and shawl and let's get at this world-beating game."

Dolly ran away for her wraps with a light heart. What a *dear* Bert was, to be sure!

Trudy helped her on with her pretty party cape, and adjusted a chiffon scarf over the curly head. Then she kissed her good-bye, and the brother and sister started forth. They stopped next door for the Roses, and all went to the Forbes house together.

They were the first arrivals, which suited Dolly's plans.

The house looked very beautiful, decorated as it was with flowers and palms. In the music room they could hear a harp and violin being tuned, and then Bernice herself came smiling, to greet them, arrayed in a stunning gown of gold-coloured crêpe, embroidered with poppies.

It was over elaborate for so young a girl, but it suited Bernice's dark hair and clear, olive skin.

Mr. Forbes stood by, pleasant and amiable, but with a natural stiffness of manner, which he found it hard to overcome. Mrs. Forbes had been dead for many years, and Bernice had had little, if any company, so that Mr. Forbes had drawn more and more into himself, and had become a sort of hermit. But this evening, he tried to be sociable, even jovial, and he succeeded fairly well.

The two lived alone, save for a small army of servants. It was Mr. Forbes' theory that an American girl is capable of looking after herself, and he desired no governess or companion for his daughter.

So Bernice had grown up, with no other mentor than her own sweet will, for her father never interfered or advised in household matters. There was a housekeeper, but she merely ordered the kitchen department, and had no supervision over Bernice.

The party would have been far more elaborate, had Bernice had her own way. But Dolly, not wanting her protégée to be criticised by the mothers of the Berwick young people, had persuaded her to keep it simpler in details than she wanted to.

"What's the use of having plenty of money if you don't spend it?" Bernice had demanded.

And Dolly had not attempted to answer her, but had merely reminded her that she had promised to do her part to reach their mutual goal, and that to abide by Dolly's decisions would favour their cause.

So there were only three pieces of music instead of a full orchestra. Only a simple, though fine and bountiful supper, instead of the gorgeous repast Bernice would have preferred. And only a proper amount of floral decoration, instead of a city florist's extreme effort.

But the house looked lovely, and the dining-room, as Dolly flew out to snatch a glance at it, was tastefully arranged.

"Awfully good of you, Mr. Forbes," said Dolly, smiling at the rather bewildered-looking man, "to let us have this pleasure."

"Not at all, not at all," said the railroad magnate, rubbing his hands. "Might just as well have had more. More music, more people, more fal-lals. I said to Bernie, 'If you're doing it, why not do it up brown?' But she said—"

"She said, 'This *is* brown,'" said Dolly, laughing. "And it is, Mr. Forbes. You know yourself, Bernie is too young for a real live ball, and that's what it would be, if she had it much more grand than this.

How beautiful your house is," and Dolly looked around admiringly.

"Glad you think so. Hasn't been re-decorated or fixed up since my wife died. Guess I'll have to furbish it up a little if Bernie is going to be in gay society."

"She surely is. You can't keep such a pretty girl all to yourself always, Mr. Forbes."

"No, I s'pose not — I s'pose not. Well, I want her to enjoy herself. She's like her mother. Her mother was a great one for gaiety. Run along, now, Miss Dolly, and join your young friends. You mustn't be wasting time on an old man like me."

Dolly smiled at him, and then went over to the group already forming around Bernice.

But she had a new bee in her bonnet. Nothing more nor less than to make friends with Mr. Forbes himself, and if need be, plead with him for her father's stay in Berwick. Dolly's was a single-minded nature. She had set her heart and mind to this plan of hers and she bent everything toward her aim. Buoyed up with hope, she came laughingly toward the young people.

"Ah, there, Dolly Fayre," sang out Tad Brown, "thought you had deserted us."

"No, indeed! I'm helping Bernice receive,— that's why I spend my time talking to her father," and Dolly laughed whimsically.

Gay as a butterfly, she smiled and chatted with everybody, but also kept a strict watch over her helpers in the game. Nor was she disappointed. In a moment, she heard Bert and Bob both pleading with Bernice for the first dance.

"You *must* give it to me," said Bert, "'cause I'm Dolly's pet brother."

"But I'm Dotty's ditto," urged Bob. "And besides, I'm a much better dancer than Bert Fayre."

"Then give it to me out of charity," said Bert. "Have pity on a poor hobble-de-hoy!"

Unaccustomed to this flattering style of conversation, Bernice blushed with pleasure, and grew coquettish.

"Maybe I won't give it to either of you," she smiled. "Maybe it's already engaged."

"Oh, say not so!" and Bert assumed a tragic pose. "But if it be, tell me the miscreant who dares aspire, and let me at him!"

"Me too," chimed in Bob. "Oh, surely, certainly me, too! Let us *both* at him!"

The boys were so ridiculous that Bernice burst into laughter, and Mr. Forbes drew nearer to see what it

was all about. Others did too, and the result was that Bernice was the centre of a jolly group.

She finally settled the matter by dividing the first dance and giving half to each of her suppliants.

And each claimed two more dances later on; and others flocked around asking Bernice for her dance card, until very shortly, her card was filled, with several down for extras.

Bernice was supremely happy. Only a girl who has been a wall-flower frequently, can appreciate the pleasure she felt in being besought for dances.

Dolly was satisfied with the behaviour of her colleagues. Not only the boys were doing their part nobly, but the girls were now and then chatting cordially with Bernice, and acting as if she were one of them.

"All serene, Dolly?" asked Bob, as he came up to claim one of his dances with her.

"Yes, indeed," and Dolly's eyes shone. "You're a trump, Bob! I thank you a thousand bushels."

"Oh, it isn't so hard. Bernie has improved a lot since last we met. She isn't nearly so pettish and stickery as she used to be. And she's mighty pretty, beside."

"Yes, isn't she! And that dress is stunning on her."

"Rather grown-uppish, isn't it? I like yours and Dot's better. But I'm not much on parties, anyhow. These dance affairs bore me stiff."

"Why, I thought you liked them. A college boy ought to be crazy about dances."

"Oh, I s'pose they're good enough, but I like better a rollicking picnic, or something outdoorsy."

"Silly! You can't have picnics in winter!"

"Well, you can have outdoor sports. There ought to be skating to-morrow, I think. It's getting awfully cold."

"I wish there would be, I love to skate."

"So do I. If there is any to-morrow, will you go?"

"Will I! Well, I just guess I will!"

"But hold on. Say, Dolly, if we go skating, have we got to lug the Bernice person along?"

"Bob, I'm ashamed of you! Just when I think I've got you well trained, you act up like that! Why, of *course* we have. She's my chum; and what you do for her, you do for me."

"Oh, jiminetty! I do hate outsiders. You and Dot and Bert and Yours Truly make such a jolly four. Why drag in others?"

"Got to be done. Now, don't whine over it, just make up your mind to it. Let's make a skating party

for to-morrow afternoon, of about eight, and then afterward go back to Treasure House and make fudge or something like that."

"All right on the fudge. But instead of eight, say four."

"No, sir! Eight it is, and *I'll* do the inviting!"

Dolly had found out that Bob's bark was worse than his bite. He might growl at the things she asked him to do, but he did them and did them well. As for Bert, he was putting things through with a dash. He not only danced with Bernice, but he sought her out between dances, and joked and laughed as he passed her on the dancing floor, and many times brought her to the attention of others in a way to win admiration for her.

At supper time the "crowd" got together in a corner of the big dining-room.

"*What* a table!" exclaimed Tod Brown. "Oh, what a feast for the gods!"

"Make believe we're little tin gods, and get us some of it," suggested Bert, who was seated by Bernice. "I daren't leave my seat. It might be snatched by a less worthy occupant. You do the foraging act, Tad,— and get some little helpers."

There were waiters, but the "crowd" often

thought it preferable to have some of their "own boys" secure viands for them.

So Tad and Clayton Rawlins and Lollie and Joe started, and soon returned with what Joe called "the pick of the lot."

"What gorgeous foods!" cried Dolly. "And I'm starving with hunger."

"So'm I," declared Grace. "May I have a tiny sandwich?"

"A tiny sandwich doesn't seem to match Grace Rawlins!" chaffed Joe. "Here's a plateful, my girl!"

"None too many," said Grace, good-naturedly. "Have some of mine, Bernice?"

Almost beside herself with joy at being really in the crowd, Bernice smiled and joked with the rest, and in their hearts most of them decided she "wasn't half-bad after all."

Celia Ferris was not so willing as the others to accept Bernice as one of them, and she stood a little aloof.

"I must go for Celia," thought Dolly, as she looked the group over, and found most of them acting in accordance with her orders.

So finding opportunity, she said to Celia, "Bernice makes a good hostess, doesn't she?"

"Good nothing!" exclaimed Celia, in a whisper. "What's the matter with everybody to rave over her, all of a sudden?"

"Well, I think she's worth raving over," Dolly defended. "Don't you?"

"'Deed I don't! And I, for one, won't toady to her just 'cause she's rich and lives in a big house —"

"Oh, Celia," and Dolly laughed outright; "how ridiculous! *Do* you s'pose, for a minute, that Bert and Bob are nice to Bernice for any such reasons? You know better!"

"I don't know as they are,— but you and Dotty Rose are."

"No, we're not. I like Bernice for far other reasons than that. And you'd better, too, unless you want to be in the minority."

And with this, Dolly turned on her heel and left the astonished Celia with something to think about.

CHAPTER XVIII

BERT AND THE BARGAIN

The day after Bernice's party everybody went skating. A lake on the outskirts of Berwick obligingly froze itself over with a sufficient thickness of ice to be entirely safe. So the whole of the younger population put itself on runners.

The Fayres and Roses arrived early in the afternoon. Encased in warm sweaters and knit caps, they braved the cold, and were soon swaying along the glassy surface.

Dolly and Dotty had decided not to call it a skating party, but after they tired of the ice, to ask half a dozen or so to go back with them to Treasure House.

Later Bernice came, alone. She wore a new skating suit of green cloth, fur-trimmed, and a jaunty green cap with a red feather.

"There's Bernice," said Dolly quickly to Bert. "You must go and skate with her."

"Won't do it. I did my duty last night, and I'm tired of the game. Get somebody else." Bert

laughed good-naturedly, and skated off with Maisie May, who had not heard the colloquy of the brother and sister.

Now Bernice, by reason of her good time the night before, seemed to take it for granted that her star was in the ascendant. "Here I am!" she cried, gaily. "Who bids for the honour of the first skate with me?"

She couldn't have chosen a worse speech. It was full of arrogance, and her condescending smile as she swung her skates in her hand, did not attract the boys who were present.

"Come on, Dotty," said Joe Collins, "let's skate off. I don't want any Forbes in mine this afternoon."

Dotty hesitated, for she had promised Dolly to help her, but Joe urged her away and the two skated off.

Dolly went straight to Bernice, and said in a low tone: "Don't talk that way, Bernie! You scare them all off. They won't stand your putting on airs."

"Airs, nothing!" cried Bernice. "Don't tell *me* how to behave, Dolly Fayre! Hello, there, Tad Brown. Put on my skates for me, won't you?"

Thus summoned, Tad had to obey, and after the

skates were adjusted, Bernice said, "Now, for a glide," and perforce Tad skated with her. But he made a grimace over his shoulder at Dolly, and Bernice saw it.

"I won't go with you, you rude thing!" she exclaimed. "I saw you wink at Dolly Fayre!"

"Well," Tad exclaimed, "haven't I a right to wink if I want to?"

"But I know what you meant, you meant you didn't want to skate with me. Come, now, didn't you?"

"If I did, I wouldn't tell you so," said Tad, half-laughing at Bernice's angry face. And this so enraged her, that she turned and left him, and skated off alone.

Dolly was in despair. Was all her plan to fall through because Bernice herself couldn't make good?

"What matter, Dollsie?" said Lollie Henry, just arriving, and seeing the woebegone face.

"Oh, Lollie, you're my friend! *Do* help me out! *Please* go and skate with Bernice, and be awfully nice to her, no matter *what* she says. Won't you, Lollie, please?"

"Sure!" said Lollie, looking into the pleading blue eyes. "What you say, goes. Me to the Bernie!"

He skated after Bernice, overtook her, and holding out his hands said, "You're a dandy skater, catch on!"

Gladly Bernice joined hands, and in a moment they were gaily skating among the others. Dolly, delighted at the sight, looked about for somebody to skate with, herself.

A laughing face peeped from behind a tree, and Reggie Stuart came cautiously forth. "Hid from the other one," he explained. "Thought you'd never get her fixed up. Why are *you* in charge of her goings and comings, Dolly?"

"'Cause I want to be. Now, you be good, Reg. If you're my friend, you've got to be Bernice's, too. Come on, let's skate. I'm bothered in my head and perhaps it will tangle up my feet, but we'll try."

It didn't; on the contrary, the delightful exercise soothed Dolly's wrought-up nerves, and with every stroke she became more her own gay, merry self.

"Look out for yourself!" she cried, as Reggie nearly tripped over a chunk of ice.

"Yes, I *am* a tangle-footed jay! Always getting in the way!"

"Nonsense! You're a fine skater! Let's catch up to Dot and Joe."

As the afternoon wore on, Dolly saw several times

that Bernice was standing alone and neglected. Several of the boys, at Dolly's insistence, or at Dotty's request, had skated with her, but only for short excursions, and somehow all the popularity that Bernice had enjoyed the night before seemed to be fading away.

"Oh, dear," Dolly sighed to herself, "I'm going to fail, after all. Last night, it was at her house, so the boys and girls *had* to be decent, but they won't keep it up, and it's all Bernie's fault. I've done all I can. But I *won't* give up! I *can't!* I must succeed!"

In desperation she flew over to Bob Rose.

"Bob, please, for my sake, *do* go and skate with Bernice!"

"Good gracious, Dolly! Why this heart-rending plea? I'll do it, if I must, but I'd a lot rather skate with you. She's so — so — dressy, you see."

"Never mind, just *go!* And *stay*, and keep on skating with her till somebody else asks her."

"Whew! That'll be till — well, off I go!"

Off Bob went, and was so pleasantly polite and courteous that Bernice had no suspicion that he had been asked to come.

"Hello," he said, cordially. "May I have the honour of a glide with the girl in green?"

Bernice smiled, and consented gladly. She was a good skater, and they glided evenly along.

"Great little old lake, isn't it?" said Bob, as they flew on. "We haven't such a good skating place at school. Only a skinny little river, that hardly ever freezes solid."

But before Bernice could respond, they heard Bob's name called by a loud voice on shore, and looking back, they saw Mr. Rose in his motor-car, beckoning to Bob.

"'Scuse me just a minute," said the boy and ran to see what his father wanted.

"Awfully sorry," he said as he returned, "but I've got to go off with Dad. It's a special matter, or I wouldn't leave you. We must have another skate together, before I go back."

With a wave of his cap, Bob ran off to join his father, and Bernice was alone again. Again Dolly came to the rescue.

This time she went for Bert, who was skating with Dotty.

"Bert Fayre," she began, "you go straight and skate with Bernie, and you make her have a good time, and don't let her know I sent you. Go right off, and don't muff it! Do it up *right*. I'm about all in, and this game is going to be too much for

me, unless *somebody* helps me and helps me right. Go on, now,— and Dot and I will skate together."

Impressed by Dolly's tense voice and harassed face, Bert obeyed.

"All right, little sister," he said. "Trust big buddie to do it up to the queen's taste. Tra-la-la!" with a flourishing bow. Bert left the two girls and skated over to where Bernice stood, looking pettish and sulky.

"Ah, there, Diana," greeted Bert; "been waiting for a chance at you. What did you do with Bob?"

"His father came, and he had to go away."

"Good boy to obey his daddy, and thereby let me have his place. Come for a whirl?"

"Do you want me to?" and Bernice looked coquettish.

"Sure! Been living all my life for this moment! Wow! You're a peach of a skater! All crosspatch girls are."

"What!" and Bernice stopped short, thinking she could not have heard aright.

"You heard me," said Bert, carelessly. "Why? Didn't you know you're crosspatch? It's written in every line of your expressive face."

Bert was laughing so pleasantly, that Bernice was

bewildered. Did he mean what he was saying? Was it a joke? Or what was the explanation?

"Needn't get huffy," Bert went on. "I s'pose you can't help it. Pity, too, such a nice girl spoiled by bad temper! Well, I don't mind; I like cross-patches myself."

"I think you're very rude!" and Bernice tried to draw her hand from his. "I don't want to skate with you."

"Oh, yes, you do, too. I'm one of the nicest boys here. And you've no reason to get mad. I'm only telling you the truth. And of course you want to be cross, or you wouldn't be so."

"I'm *not* cross!"

"Oh, *no!* No! You're our little ray o' sunshine! Oh, *yes!*"

As a matter of fact, Bernice was in a towering rage. She had never before been spoken to like this, and she didn't know what to make of it. But it was difficult to be angry at a boy who grinned in a most friendly manner, even while he said such impertinent things.

"Now, look here, Bernice Forbes," Bert went on, as they skated smoothly along, "I know all about your bargain with my sister. I think it's a crazy

idea, but all the same, I think it's a fair deal. And I want to help. But Dolly doesn't need help, *she* can do all she has set out to do. So, I want to help you. Mayn't I?"

Bert's frank, boyish face was very wheedlesome, and as he smiled at Bernice, she saw he was in earnest and in a kindly, whole-souled way meant just what he said.

"I think you're the strangest boy I ever saw!" she exclaimed.

"All right, let it go at that. But let's have this thing out. Are you willing to let me help you?"

"Help me what?"

"Don't let's pretend. You know what I mean, or, — if you want it in plain English,— help you to be one of the most popular girls in Berwick, which is what you *ought* to be, and *can* be as well as not."

"No, I can't. I've tried —"

"Excuse me, you haven't tried. At least, not in the right way."

"What is the right way?"

"Ah, you ask that. Then, you are willing to let me help you?"

"Of course I am, if you can do it."

"Then, first of all, you must remove that chip from your shoulder."

Bert spoke so earnestly, that Bernice involuntarily glanced at her shoulder.

"Yes, it's there," said Bert gravely. "You see, Bernie, you think the world owes you a living, and the world is not sure that it does. So you've got to earn that living."

"Earn my own living! Why, my father —"

"Oh, can't you understand parables? I mean, you think Berwick owes you a liking, then, and really, you've got to *make* Berwick like you. Berwick, in this case, meaning the dozen or so boys and girls of our set."

"Well, then, if you know so much, how am I to make them?"

"First, as I said, dislodge that very large and elegant chip that adorns your shoulder,— meaning, don't feel grouchy toward people because they don't run and fall on your neck as you approach."

"Why, Bert Fayre, you're awful!"

"'Course I'm awful, but I've simply got to put it to you straight. I know what Dolly's after, and I know you can give it to her, and yet, it will all be of no use if you don't play up yourself. You will, Bernice, won't you?"

"Yes, I will. But I don't know how."

"Yes, you *do* know how, only you find it hard.

All you have to do to make people like you and want to be with you, is to like them and be nice to them. You can't just sit around accepting,— you must give."

"Give what?"

"Smiles, kindliness, gaiety, fun, nonsense, real true understanding, and all the things that go to make a tiptop girl."

"Like Dolly?"

"Yes, like my sister, and Dot Rose and Maisie May, and the Rawlins girls —"

"Everybody except me!"

"Well, if you see it that way, then act so you'll put yourself in the bunch."

"I'm going to try, Bert. You've given me a new idea."

"I know; you thought Dolly could do it all, and you just sit back and take favours as they drop in your lap. Well, probably you can do that some day, but first, you've got to make good. See?"

Bernice had only a chance for an answering smile, when Dolly called to them to come on, as they were going home.

Bert and Bernice turned back, and joined the others, took off their skates and started homeward. The crowd separated to take their various ways, and

the two D's asked a few to go to Treasure House with them for a fudge feast.

"Better come," said Bert to Bernice. "The girls make ripping fudge."

And very gladly Bernice went along. Dolly had not meant to ask her, for she was wearied with her afternoon's efforts and a little discouraged.

But she seconded Bert's invitation, and with the two Browns and Lollie, they all went to Treasure House.

The boys built up a roaring log fire while the girls went to the kitchenette to make the cherished fudge.

"Let me help," said Bernice in such a gay, sunshiny voice that Dotty looked up in surprise.

"All right, Bernie," she said, meeting her half way. "You shave off this chocolate, and Doll and I will fix the other ingrejunts."

All three worked with a will, and in the shortest possible time consistent with good fudge, the candy was ready.

"Sim-pul-ly delicious!" exclaimed Lollie, rolling his eyes up. "Who made it?"

"All of us," said Bernice, "but mostly Dolly and Dotty. I only helped."

"It's the help part that tastes so good, then," and Bert smiled at her, with a knowing nod.

This delighted Bernice, and expanding under the warmth of Bert's approval, she tried her best to be entertaining, and in gayest mood she chaffed and joked until she was really the centre of attraction.

"Must go home now," she said, at last. "I just hate to leave, but Dad gets home at six, and he always wants to see his little girl there waiting for him."

"Good-bye, Bernie, if you must go," said Dotty, and then all were surprised to hear Bert say, "I'll walk around with you,— it's sort of dusk."

"Thank you," said Bernice in the nicest kind of way, and they started off.

"Well," said Dolly, as the other boys had gone too, "Bert *is* an old trump, after all. Bob was, too, only he was called off just at the wrong time."

"He'll do his part yet," and Dotty wagged her head assuredly; "I'll make him!"

"Do, Dot," said Dolly.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ELECTION

It cannot be denied that Dolly had a hard task before her in what she had undertaken. When Bert and Bob went back to school, she lost two very efficient helpers, and her own efforts seemed to be unavailing. Dotty was willing enough to help, but she was so quick-tempered herself, she could do little for or with Bernice.

And Bernice, herself, was most aggravating. Just as Dolly would get the girls and boys ready to do something nice for her, Bernice would break out in a pettish mood, or pick some silly quarrel, that interfered with all plans.

"There's just this about it," Dolly said to Dotty, one afternoon, as they sat in Treasure House, talking it over, "we've got to do something desperate to boom Bernie, or I've got to give it all up, and then she won't ask her father to let us stay, and we'll have to go away from Berwick."

The tears flooded her blue eyes, and rolled down

her cheeks. Dotty, overcome by the thought, burst into violent weeping.

"You shan't go, Dollyrinda! I won't let you! I can't spare you!"

"But that's nonsense, Dot. We've got to go, if my plan falls through. And it has about fallen."

"You said you'd speak to Mr. Forbes, himself."

"I know, but I can't do that. I've thought it out, and I believe that would be wrong, because I know Dad wouldn't like me to do it. But to bargain with Bernice is different. Just two girls, you know."

"Well, let's try some new plan. I'll tell you, Doll, let's make her Class President. We vote next week, you know. We'll electioneer,— or whatever you call it,— and make the whole class vote for her."

"Yes! Make the whole class vote for her! I think I see them doing that!"

"Well, we can get a majority, anyway. You and I can coax or bribe lots of the girls, and Tod and Tad will help round up the boys on our side."

"Well," and Dolly brightened a little, "maybe we could do that. Bernie is so uncertain, lately. One day she's as sweet as pie, and then she's queer as a spidereen! Celia won't vote for her, I know that."

"I bet I can make Celia vote for her. I know a way!" and Dotty wagged her head wisely.

Dolly was too busy thinking to ask what the way was. "You see," she went on, "we mustn't let Bernice know we're getting votes for her, or she'll get mad."

"No, she needn't know it, but we ought to get right at it, Doll."

"Yes; let's go to see the Rawlins now."

It was uphill work from the beginning. The two D's canvassed the whole class, and found the tide of prejudice strongly against Bernice for President. This was no more than they had expected, and they set bravely to work to induce individual members to change their minds.

Moreover the Brown boys declined to help. They were good chums of the two D's, and they rather liked Bernice, at times, but they didn't want her for Class President. They were nice about it, but very decided.

So Lollie Henry was the only boy whom they could depend on for assistance. But he was willing to do anything, and expressed an intention of punching the heads of the fellows who refused to do as he advised them.

"Oh, don't do that, Lollie," said Dolly, laughing to think what means were being proposed to aid her to gain her point. "Never mind using such strong measures,— just persuade them by argument."

"You don't know the fellows as I do, Dolly. They won't listen to argument, and you just *have* to punch them. But I'll do it gently, if you say so."

"Bribe them," advised Dotty. "I got Minnie Dorlon over by giving her my fountain pen."

"Bribery and corruption!" exclaimed Lollie. "That is much worse then punching heads!"

"Oh, all ways are all right, if they work," Dolly declared. "The little bribes we offer won't hurt anybody. I'm going to get Celia Ferris's vote by means of my portfolio."

"Dotty!" cried Dolly, "your new leather portfolio?"

"Yep. Celia is just daffy over it, and says she'll vote for Bernice if I give her that, and on no other condition. Oh, I don't mind. And it's no harm to bribe in a little election like this. If the girls want these things, they might as well have 'em, and then we get their votes."

"Not a bad idea," said Lollie, musingly. "I bet Jim Lee would vote for anybody, if I gave him my last year's skates. And I don't want them."

"That's it," said Dotty. "Try every means, Lollie, and then we *must* get the election."

Bernice knew that she was a candidate for the Presidency, but she did not know how Dolly and Dotty were working for her election. She remarked to Dolly, that if she should be made President of the class she should consider it a mark of popularity more than almost anything else.

"And you'll remember our bargain," said Dolly, eagerly.

"Yes, I will. If I'm President, it'll be because the class likes me, of course, and I'm quite ready to admit that I owe that liking in great part to you."

"And you'll do what you promised?"

"Of course I will. I can easily make father arrange for your father to stay here. I sounded him, and I found out he'll do it if I say so."

"Oh, Bernice, then I think you might do it, whether you get elected or not! For I've done everything I could for you, and I can't help the result."

"No," and Bernice shut her lips tightly together; "I won't speak to father about it at all, if I'm not made President. A bargain is a bargain."

So Dolly redoubled her efforts. But the trouble was, the opposing candidate was a favourite of all,

Molly Mooney, a girl who lived over on the other side of town, was not in the Two D's set, but she was a merry, good-natured girl, whom everybody liked. And so, many of the class declared their intention of voting for Molly Mooney, and couldn't be persuaded to alter their decision.

It was a very trying situation, for Dolly couldn't explain *why* she was so desperately anxious to have Bernice elected; and many of her best friends laughingly refused to listen when she urged them to vote on her side.

The contest promised to be a close one. Up to the very day of the election, Dolly and Dotty never ceased trying to turn the tide in their favour.

The two girls felt sure they would win, but Lollie said he was doubtful. He had persuaded Joe Collins to help him in his electioneering, and Joe was doing it for the fun of the thing.

"I don't care a red cent," Joe said, "who is President. It's only a figurehead position anyway, when a girl holds it. The Committee decides everything. But if you two girls want Bernice so terribly, why I'll help all I can. She is in our set, and Molly Mooney isn't. Though Molly is an awful nice girl."

So Joe hustled around, and announced the day of the election, that he had secured two more votes that

morning. "But some are backing out," he added. "The fellows promise, and they go back on their word. Awful mean, but they do, all the same. Now, Hy Landon, he told me yesterday he'd vote for Bernice, and to-day he told Lollie he didn't intend to at all! So you can't tell."

The election was to take place directly after school was out in the afternoon. All day, Dolly and Dotty were in a state of nervous excitement. Usually most exemplary of conduct in school hours, this day found them writing notes and whispering in the class rooms, and so preoccupied were they with the one idea, that each missed a lesson.

"But," poor Dolly thought to herself, "it doesn't matter if I do miss my lessons, if I've got to move away from Berwick!" and then the tears would force themselves to her eyes, and she had to dab furtively with her handkerchief.

After school, the two candidates went home. It was not the custom for them to stay to the election.

Molly Mooney went off, laughing, and calling back to her friends to stand by her, and elect her.

Bernice, on the other hand, walked off without a word; her head tossing haughtily, as if she had no concern in the matter.

"The worst thing she could do!" fumed Dotty.

"The ones 'on the fence' will be put out at her manner, and will vote for Molly!"

Some other business was transacted and then the election began.

Even at the last minute a note was thrust into Dotty's hand. It was from Tod Brown and it said:

"If I vote for Bernice, will you give me all the dances at the High School Christmas Dance?"

"How perfectly ridiculous!" exclaimed Dotty to herself. And looking over at Tod, she said a noiseless but unmistakable "No!"

"All right," Tod signalled back, "then I vote for Molly."

"Oh, goodness!" thought the distracted Dotty, "what shall I do? It would be idiotic to dance every dance with him, and yet — if it means the casting vote —"

She hastily scribbled a note which said, "I'll give you half."

"Honest?" asked Tod, from across the room. "Cross your heart?"

Hastily Dotty "crossed her heart" and Tod signified assent to voting for her candidate.

"For," Dotty reasoned, "if Bernice isn't elected and Dolly goes away, I shan't go to the dance. And

if Dolly stays, I'll be so glad I won't care *who* I dance with!"

The votes were taken and the tellers went into another room to count up.

Breathlessly the Two D's awaited the result. It seemed as if the word would never come. At last, the door opened and the tellers came back. As soon as she saw their jubilant faces, Dolly knew her doom. They all wanted Molly, and it must be that Molly was elected judging from their smiling looks.

And sure enough, the result, as stated, was that Molly Mooney was elected Class President by a majority of three.

"How awfully close!" said everybody, and there was general rejoicing, for many of those who had promised to vote for Bernice and who did vote for her, really preferred Molly.

Dolly said no word, but went to the cloakroom for her wraps. Dotty followed and two more gloomy, sad little countenances you never saw. They started homeward, alone, for they had hastened out before the others who went their way.

"Where you going?" said Dotty, as Dolly turned a corner.

"To see Bernice. I told her I'd come and tell her the result."

"Want me to go with you?"

"Yes, of course. Oh, Dot, she'll be awful mad."

"I know it, but we did our best."

"That doesn't matter. She'll be mad at me, all the same."

And Bernice was. When the girls told her that Molly was Class President, she turned on Dolly like a little termagant. "I knew you couldn't run that thing, Dolly Fayre! You think yourself so smart, bossing everybody around, but you couldn't do just that one little thing!"

"Don't you talk like that, Bernice," said Dotty, herself quite as angry. "Dolly worked like everything, and so did I. If you aren't the most popular girl in the class, we can't help it!"

"I know you can't," said Bernice, dully, "but Dolly *said* she could. That's what makes me mad; she said she'd accomplish something and she didn't do it."

"No, I didn't, Bernice," admitted Dolly, "and I'm sorry. I suppose now you won't ask your father —"

"Of course I won't! A bargain is a bargain. I said if I won the election, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

"Well, I didn't win it, did I?"

"No."

"Then that's all there is about it, *I* think."

"And you're not going to ask your father —"

"I'm not going to ask my father anything. You haven't done what you said you would, for me, and I'm not bound to do anything for you!"

"All right, Bernice, good-bye," and Dolly got up and left the room and went out of the house.

She was so blinded by her irrepressible tears, that she didn't notice that Dotty wasn't with her. She stumbled home, and going to her room, she flung herself on her bed and had her cry out.

Then she got up, bathed her eyes, and sat down to think it over. But there seemed to be nothing more to think of. She had tried her best and had failed. There was no other way to try, and no hope for remaining in Berwick now. To be sure she had said she would appeal to Mr. Forbes for her father's retention in his present position, but that plan didn't seem right, and she abandoned it.

Meantime, Dotty had stayed behind with Bernice.

"You can do anything you please," Dotty said, her eyes blazing with anger, "but I'm going to tell you what I think of you! The idea of letting Dolly Fayre do all she has done for you and then refusing

to use your influence with your father for her just because you lost the election! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"It isn't only that, but Dolly said she would make me one of the most popular girls in town and she hasn't done it. A bargain is a —"

"Don't say that over again! You make me so mad. I *know* a bargain is a bargain, but of course all Dolly could do, was to *try* to make you popular, and she has done that. If she couldn't succeed, it's your fault, not hers!"

"But I've tried too, Dotty."

At this speech muttered in an humble voice, Dotty looked up in astonishment. Had she struck a right chord at last?

"Have you, Bernie?" she said gently. "Perhaps if we *all* tried again, we might yet win out. Not the presidency, that's settled, but there are other sorts of popularity."

"I know. I don't care so much about the election, but it shows that nobody likes me."

"No, it doesn't. It shows that you're very nearly as popular as Molly Mooney. For there was only a majority of three."

"Only three! Why, you didn't tell me that! Why, Dotty, if that's all the difference there was in

the count, it's almost as good as being elected! Only *three!*"

"Yes, that's all. I didn't know you'd care what the count was, if you didn't win."

"Why, of course I care! Don't you see that to come as close as that, shows that lots of them did want me?"

Dotty knew it didn't show quite this, but still it was an indication of willingness to have Bernice, no matter for what reason. She followed up the advantage. "Then Bernice, if you realise that, don't you see that next time it might be a winning vote for you?"

"Yes, it encourages me to keep on trying. Oh, Dotty, I have tried,— tried, I mean, to be so nice and gay and pleasant that they would like me."

"I believe you have, Bernice. And I want you to promise me to keep on trying. Now, see here, give Dolly and me another chance. You bargained with her that she should have till the first of January to keep her part of the bargain. Now, here you're turning her down in the middle of December!"

"That's so. That isn't fair."

"No, it isn't. And you're always fair. Will you stick to your own bargain, and give her till the first of the New Year?"

"Of course I will. You tell her so. And, say,

Dotty, I do want to do this thing right, you know. I want to be liked for myself, not because Dolly's booming me. Don't you think I can?"

"Of course you can, Bernie. You've only to be your own self,— your nicest self, you know,— and not give way to those stuck-up airs you used to show so much. Just be affable and willing to chum, and people will like you fast enough. Now, I must run. I want to tell Dolly what you've said, before she cries her eyes out. Good-bye, and thank you lots for this little talk,— we'll have another some day soon."

CHAPTER XX

THE CARNIVAL QUEEN

"FATHER," said Bernice Forbes as the two sat at dinner that night, "are you a popular man?"

"Bless my soul, Bernie! What do you mean?"

"Just that, Dad. Are you popular among your friends and business associates?"

"Well, that's a leading question, my girl; and I'm not sure I want to answer it. For, to tell the truth, Daughter, I'm not so very popular,— as popularity goes."

"Why aren't you?" and Bernice looked serious.

"Why are you asking?"

"For a good reason, Daddy. Please tell me."

"Well, then, Bernie, I'm not popular because I'm not willing to forget myself. To be honest, I'm a man of decided opinions,— among others, a pretty good opinion of myself,— and that sort of a nature doesn't command admiration from the crowd."

"Don't you care, Father?"

"Not much. I feel sometimes as if I'd like to be more chummy with my men friends; then I'm apt to

say something to provoke them, and they rather evade me."

"Dad, that's just my case. But I *do* want to be popular. In school I mean,— and with the boys and girls. I've never been a favourite."

"No? Well, you can be, easily enough, if you choose."

"How?"

"Simply by being agreeable always. And by agreeable, I don't mean plausibly polite, I mean actually to *agree* with people. With what they say and what they do."

"Whether I mean it, or not!"

"Pshaw! I don't want you to tell falsehoods, of course. But if some one says, 'I just adore sunflowers, don't you?' and you hate them, you needn't say, 'No, I detest the horrid things!" but you can say, 'They're such a brilliant yellow,' or 'They do grow very tall,' or something generally acquiescent, instead of flatly disagreeing. Do you see?"

"Some. And if anybody raves over a girl that I dislike, I suppose I can keep my mouth shut."

"More than that. You can surely find something nice to say about the girl, even if you dislike other traits she has."

"Yes, I s'pose I could. And if the girls do things

that I can't abide, I s'pect I can at least refrain from criticism."

"But that isn't enough, Bernie. You must seem to *like* them, unless, of course, it's something really wrong. But if it's only a habit or a mannerism or a fashion, smile at it, and agree, even if your own private opinion is just the opposite. This is simple tact,— and will win popularity for you sooner than anything else."

"There's something in what you say, Father. I've always held out for my own opinions and tastes in the most unimportant matters, and I see now, that's one reason why they call me 'stuck-up' and 'proudy.'"

Mr. Forbes smiled. "I remember from my own schooldays, those are the most awful faults a child can have. I advise you, Honey, to quit such an attitude, and acquire the habit of agreeing. If Maisie May likes blue hair-ribbons and you like pink, say the blue are pretty. That can't hurt your conscience, for they *are* pretty. And it will make Maisie feel far more friendly, than if you deride the blue."

"Of course, Dad, your hair-ribbon example is a silly one, but it does express the idea. I've been too dictatorial, and self-sufficient. Now, I'm going to

turn over a new leaf. I'm going to agree with everybody —"

"In trifles, Bernie. Don't go so far as to misrepresent yourself in any matter of importance or any question of right or wrong. If any one tells you it's a fine day you needn't say *you* think it raw and disagreeable. But if any one says it's a fine day, and it's pouring buckets,— then say it's raining and stick to it."

"I see, Dad," and Bernice laughed. "I've got sense enough to understand what you mean. And I'm going to profit by it. Is this the sort of thing you don't do?"

"I'm afraid it is, girlie. I have a naturally contrary disposition, and if any one says anything, it's my first impulse to contradict him. I've tried to correct this, but I'm too old a dog to learn new tricks. But you're young, and you ought to mend your ways, where mending is needed. Myself,— I think you're perfect, just as you are," and Mr. Forbes smiled fondly at his pretty daughter.

"Dear old Dad! But I might be a better girl if you taught me more about behaviour and such things, than if you just approve of me."

"Can't do it, Honey. To me you're a piece of perfection,— the apple of my eye. And all I ask

is that you shall be happy and have everything you want. Is there anything I can give you, Dearie, that you don't possess?"

"No, you dear old Father. But some day, soon, perhaps, I may ask a favour of you, a strange one, too."

"All right, it's granted in advance. To the half of my kingdom,— and then, the other half!"

Bernice was right. It would have been far better if Mr. Forbes had exercised a kind supervision over his daughter and her ways, instead of giving her this unquestioning approbation. But such was his nature, and the motherless girl suffered in consequence.

However, Bernice took to heart her father's talk about being agreeable, and began at once to put it in practice. She was astonished to find how easy it was. Often she stifled an impulse to contradict, and discovered that she could honestly agree just as well.

But it was slow work. Nobody seemed ready to meet her half-way. Even the Two D's had become disheartened, for the girls and boys tired of showing Bernice attention just because Dolly and Dotty asked them to.

And about a week before the Christmas holidays, Mr. Fayre told his family that they might as well begin to pack up.

"Nothing more will be said until after January first," he remarked, "but there seems no hope of a change of plans. You know what Forbes is. I'd rather not speak to him on the subject, and get snubbed for my pains."

"But you might just ask him, Father," said Trudy. "I hate to resign from my club and give up my place on the Concert Committee, unless we're surely going away."

"You may as well give them up, Trudy," answered her father, "for we're sure to go."

"When?" asked Dolly, with a quivering lip.

"About the middle of January, dear. I'm very sorry for you, Dolly, girlie, but you can have Dotty to visit you a lot, and you can visit her."

"And Treasure House?" said Dolly, in a broken voice.

"That we'll turn over to Dotty. We can't very well take it with us."

"Oh, Daddy, it will *kill* me!" and Dolly flung herself into her father's arms in a paroxysm of weeping.

"There, there, dear little girl, it *is* terribly hard, I know. But try to bear it, my darling little daughter. I'll do anything I can for you, to make up. Perhaps you can have another Treasure House in

Buffalo. But not unless we're fairly sure of staying there permanently."

"Oh, I don't *want* another Treasure House! Nor another Dotty! I just want *this* House and *this* Dotty! Oh, I can't *stand* it!"

It was a long time before they could quiet the nervous and heartbroken child. At last, quite worn out, she went to bed, but not to sleep. She lay there, "thinking it out."

"I must manage it somehow," she kept saying to herself. "There's Bernice, she could keep us here by a single word to her father, and she won't do it. I've done all I possibly can to make her popular, what more could I do? It seems so silly to have my whole life's happiness hang on the word of that girl! But if it does hang there, why *can't* I pick it off? Why, oh, *why?*"

Tossing and tumbling in her little white bed, Dolly put in an awful night. At last one little forlorn hope came to her.

"If I can do that," she thought, seeing a tiny ray of hope, "Bernice will surely agree that I have kept my part of the bargain."

She thought and thought. She planned and planned.

At last, though it was two o'clock in the morning,

she jumped out of bed and throwing on her dressing-gown, sat at her desk and wrote a long letter to Bert and another to Bob Rose.

Then she went back to bed, and after a short time sleep came to ease the poor little worried mind.

The days flew by. The cold weather continued, and skating was the delight of all the young people. Bernice was a fine skater, and close watch on the part of Dolly and Dotty showed that she had partners for the skating parties far oftener than she used to.

This favoured Dolly's new plan, the same being nothing more nor less than to have Bernice chosen Queen of the Carnival, which on Christmas Eve was to be the great celebration of the holiday season.

A skating carnival had not been possible for many years, but the exceptionally cold winter had made it feasible this season, and all the young people of Berwick were wildly enthusiastic over it.

Tad and Tod Brown were willing this time to consent to the request of the Two D's to vote for Bernice as Carnival Queen.

"She's a bang-up skater," said Tad; "the best in Berwick, I think. And, another thing, Bernie is a heap nicer than she used to be. She's come down off her high horse, and almost never rubs in her wealth and grandeur."

"She *is* nicer," agreed Tod. "She doesn't snap a fellow up, everything he says, and she smiles more, somehow."

All this was as balm to Dolly's soul. She rejoiced to hear the boys speak thus of Bernice. Then she had cold chills, lest, since Bernice was winning praise by her own improvement, she might conclude that Dolly had no hand in it, and therefore had not won her promised reward.

But the two indefatigable workers kept on. They were more wary than they had been when trying to get Bernice made class President, for in this instance, many were concerned beside their class in High School. So they worked quietly, even secretly, but they urged many to vote for Bernice as Queen of the Carnival, and partly owing to the position and influence of Mr. Forbes, many expressed themselves as more than willing to consent.

The hopes of the Two D's ran high. Dolly's letters to the two boys had resulted in their influencing a number of boys in Berwick whom the girls did not know well enough to speak to about it.

And so, when the question came up before the committee, public spirit was so much in favour of Bernice that she was chosen Queen by a large majority.

"Oh!" sighed Dolly in absolute content, when she

heard of it. "I *am* so glad! Is it really true? Dotty, we've won something, anyway! I don't know whether Bernie will feel that *I* did anything to help, but I did!"

"You bet you did!" cried Dotty, "and I'll see to it that Bernice knows."

"Be careful,— you know she hates to owe it to my efforts —"

"But that was her bargain."

"I know, but still, she squirms when she thinks I just plain coax people to be nice to her."

"I should think she would! Isn't it horrid, Doll, to win favour that way?"

"Of course, it seems so to us; but you know how Bernie is. I suppose, Dot, if she had a mother like the rest of us have, she'd be different."

"I s'pose so."

The night of the carnival came. A perfect night, clear, cold, and illuminated by a kindly moon, which was somewhat eclipsed by the lights that surrounded and glorified the little Berwick lake.

The decorations were elaborate, and the committee in charge were justly proud of their display.

Bob and Bert were home for their holiday, and were eager to know the result of the campaign.

"Fine," declared Dolly. "Bernie was chosen by

a big majority and she'll be a stunning Queen. She's going to wear white velvet and ermine,— real ermine! Won't she be beautiful?"

She was beautiful. The costume, though magnificent, was none too grand for a carnival queen; and better than that, the face, under the crown of gold filigree, tipped with white ostrich feathers, was sweet and smiling, and showed only kindly and merry impulses.

Dolly, as she herself dressed for the carnival, was distinctly nervous and apprehensive. Bernice had been so busy getting ready for the event and attending to its details, that Dolly hadn't seen her alone for weeks. She couldn't say exactly that Bernice had avoided her, but they had not been thrown together, and Dolly had no idea whether Bernice intended to carry out her part of the contract or not.

She feared *not;* and it was with a heavy heart that she donned her pretty skating costume.

It was of light blue cloth, banded with silver fox. A cap to match sat jauntily on the golden curls, and it was a lovely reflection that looked back at her from her mirror. But Dolly cared little for her own appearance, so unnerved was she over the uncertainty that still hung over her.

Meantime Dotty, next door, was also dressing for

the carnival. Her costume was of red broadcloth, with dark fur trimmings. It was of Russian effect, and suited well the rosy beauty of the girl.

She, too, was thoughtful. At last she exclaimed, "I can't *stand* it!" and throwing aside the cap she was about to don, she flew down to the library and snatched up the telephone.

"Bernice," she said, after she got the connection, "I *must* ask you. Are you going to ask your father, — you know what?"

"What?" asked Bernice, so full of her own affairs, she really didn't think what Dotty had in mind.

"You *do* know. About — somebody's staying in Berwick, instead of going away."

"Oh, that. Well, I can't bother about it now. Yes, I'll do it,— some time or other. But I don't know as — somebody — had such a lot to do with this carnival business —"

"Well, somebody *did!* Now, you just catch on to this! If somebody *hadn't*, you wouldn't be — what you are to-night!"

"Don't talk so plain — over the telephone! I'll see you later —"

"No, you won't! You'll settle this here and now, or — you'll be sorry! I tell you she did her part and more than her part. You said yourself, a bargain's

a bargain. Now you've got to keep your word, or — I'll make you sorry that she kept hers!"

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. If you don't do what you promised — right now,— I'll tell everybody how you happened to be Queen —"

"Hush! Dotty, don't talk so plain!"

"Well, will you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Ask your father — you know what."

"Yes,— I'll ask him."

"Right now?"

"No, of course not *now*. To-morrow."

"No, sir, *now!* You go straight to him, and fix it up, or I'll do what I said."

"Goodness, what an impatient —" and just then it struck Bernice that she was to agree with people! "All right, Dotsie," she said with such a sudden change of intonation that Dotty nearly fell off her chair. "I'll go right now. You hang up, and I'll call you in a few minutes."

"Honest?"

"Yes, honest and truly."

Dotty waited. In a short time the telephone bell rang, and Bernice said, "It's all right. Dad says he can arrange it as easy as pie. He didn't know

they wanted to stay here so much. Shall I tell Dolly?"

"No, let me tell her."

"All right. Rather you would. I'm fearfully busy. Good-bye."

Bernice was evidently preoccupied with her preparations, but Dotty didn't care now. They had won! Mr. Forbes had given his word, and all was well.

Flinging on her cap, that was part of her costume, Dotty flew over to Dolly's like a small but very energetic whirlwind.

Up the stairs she bounded, and into Dolly's room. She grabbed her round the neck and kissed her frantically, while she cried, "It's all right! We've won! Mr. Forbes says you can stay!"

"What!" and Dolly's blue eyes opened wide in glad surprise.

Bert and Trudy heard the commotion, and came from their rooms.

"Yes," Dotty whispered, still holding Dolly tight. "It's all right, I tell you!"

"What's all right?" asked Trudy, looking at the two beaming girls.

"Never mind, Trude," said Bert, catching on. "Leave the kiddies alone,— they've got a secret."

Bert led Trudy away, and laughingly put her back in her own room.

Then he went to Dolly's door.

"All right, Dot? Honestly?"

"Yes, *yes*, YES! Oh, isn't it grand!"

And then Dotty told of her telephone talk with Bernice, and how Mr. Forbes had willingly agreed to let Mr. Fayre stay in the New York office, and continue to live in Berwick.

"Hooray!" cried Bert, grabbing off the two girls' caps and flinging them to the ceiling. "Hadn't a cap on, so had to take yours! I say, you two are bricks! How ever *did* you do it?"

"Tell you all about it to-morrow," said Dotty smiling. "We must get off to the carnival now, if we're going at all."

"Hold on," said Dolly, still a little bewildered with delight. "I must tell Dad and Mumsie!"

"Of course," said Dotty, "and Trudy, too."

The joyful news was spread abroad, and great rejoicing was in the house of Fayre.

Dolly made a clean breast of the whole matter, and though Mr. Fayre was dumfounded, he couldn't suppress his laughter at the way his daughter had manœuvred.

"You're a case, Dollygirl!" he exclaimed. "I'll see Mr. Forbes about this to-morrow."

"But you'll stay in Berwick, Father?"

"Oh, yes, we'll stay in Berwick. I think Berwick has earned the honour of your citizenship as long as you live. Dolly, you have surprised me,— you certainly have!"

"Where *are* you people?" called Bob Rose from the hall. "It's time to start!"

Dolly was just then smothered in her mother's embrace. She lifted her beaming face, and called out, "All right, Bob. Coming!"

And with gay laughter, the Rose-Fayre quartette started off, secure in the knowledge that they were all four, permanent citizens of the town of Berwick!

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